European envoys' visit to death row irks Palace

Bayanihang Baseco relief drive launched

THE OFFICE of the Department of Social Welfare and Development in Metro Manila, in coordination with the Philippine Daily Inquirer, has launched the Bayanihang Baseco emergency relief campaign for the victims of the Jan. 11 fire that razed the Baseco compound in Port Area, Manila.

The eight-hour fire, which destroyed

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

US bars RP executives from leaving Hawaii

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao, Jerome Aning and Philip C. Tubeza

SACH FORCED to questioned for up to 36 hours in connection with the US Department of Justice inquiry into allegations that Philippine tobacco firms were acting as a cartel at the expense of US tobacco companies.

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph | Friday, January 16, 2004 | 32 pages | vol. IV / no. 39 | website: www.inq7.net

Gov't gets Marcos loot

FPJ says he's not a clone of Erap

By Christine O. Avendaño and Yolanda Grande-Fuentes
Phil Northern Luzon Bureau

SAN CARLOS CITY, Pangasinan—He's no one's puppet, he said. And he's definitely no one's clone.

Breaking silence, actor Fernando Poe Jr. yesterday answered an audience of mostly students in his home province that, if he became president, he would not be dictated upon, or influenced, by anyone or anything.

While I am a close friend of Mayor [name] President Joseph Estrada]," he said, "my paramount loyalty is [to] no one [else], there are no identical twins."

[DNA, or disagreements] are said, is a group of organic compounds found in the cells of living things that transmit genetic information. The actor clearly meant to stress only that he was "not an-

FEEDING FRENZY
In the political landscape, crocodile bars come to symbolize the typical thick-skinned Filipino politician grasping greedy insatiable. Which is probably an unfair representation of these reptiles photographed here at a government croc farm in Palawan as they feast on fish.

SC orders Sandigan to execute transfer

By Dona Pazzibugan and Philip C. Tubeza

THE ACTUAL recovery of the $683 million in Rigoletto wealth of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos is within the government's grasp.

The Supreme Court has ordered the Sandiganbayan to immediately execute the high court's ruling last year forfeiting the $683 million in Swiss deposits in favor of the government.

The order was contained in an en banc resolution dated Jan. 13, which was released only yesterday. "[or] the case be immediately remanded to the Sandiganbayan for execution," the high court said.

The high court granted the government's motion dated Nov. 7 to annul the decision into the records of the court. Then it referred to the Sandiganbayan "for appropriate action" the government's motion dated Nov. 29, 2003 for "immediate execution" of the forfeiture.

The Presidential Commission on Good Government, which has been trying to recover the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses and their cronies since 1986, breathed a sigh of relief.

"It has been a long and arduous struggle and I'm very glad the end is just completely over," PCGG Chair Haydee Yorac said.

One of the PCGG lawyers who handled the case said the famil-

Parties can change candidates up to election day

By Marvin P. Mariñ

NOW THAT it's back to the manual system of counting votes, the deadline for substitution of candidates has been moved—to noon of election day, May 10.

The Commission on Elections yesterday announced major changes in its schedule, including the substitution deadline, which was originally on Jan. [illegible] day.

"Since the Supreme Court has decided that the machines are defective, we have to go back to the original schedules as far as substitutions are concerned... They can substitute candidates even up to midday of election day," Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said yesterday.

This means that political parties whose candidates want to withdraw or have been disqualified can still change their slates up to almost literally the last minute.

The Comelec also said the period for the inclusion and exclusion of voters to complete the voters' list—which was also supposed to end yesterday—was extended up to the end of the month.

Abalos explained that the original deadline was set for Jan. 31 because the election agency needed more time to print the names of candidates in the ballots for automated elections.

The Comelec also studied many time for the inclusion and exclusion of voters because voters' names had to be encoded in the voters' list.

But since the Supreme Court voided the contract for the provision of counting machines, Abalos said, the Comelec has to use specific provisions of the Omnibus Election Law, which covers manual elections.

"We have to go back to the provisions of the Omnibus Election Code as far as substitution is concerned and the filing of the indictment and validation as the case may be," he said.

Section 77 of the code allows substitution up to noon of election day in case "an official candidate of a registered or accredited political party dies, withdraws or

High court ruling moves Abalos to tears

By Carlos Pobre and Marvin P. Mariñ

PEPE, like crying over the election issue that the country sees finds itself in? You're not alone.

According to Deputy Speaker for the Visayas Raul Gonzalez, Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos broke down in front of President Macapagal-Arroyo in a meeting on Tuesday evening in Malacañang.

Senate after the Supreme Court struck down the automation contract for the May 10 national and local elections.

The high court's strongly

Public defender asks SC to spare death convicts

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE PUBLIC Attorney's Office yesterday urged the Supreme Court to stop the scheduled execution of two death row inmates, saying it would be "legally absurd" to kill them while their co-accused were still on trial.

In a 15-page "urgent" motion, PAO chief Persida Rueda-Acosta asked the high court to reopen the case of Frederick Lucapas and Rolando Lara, who both have only 14 more days to live.

Rueda pointed out that the inmates' co-accused—Pedro Balbastro and Rogelio de los Reyes, alias Noel de los Reyes—had cleared Lara of involvement in the kidnapping of businessman Joseph Tomas Uy and his assistant, Linda Manansing, and that an unidentified woman visited her office on Tuesday to vouch for Lara's innocence.

Balbastro and De los Reyes were arrested recently. The Muntinlupa Regional Trial Court has set their arraignment on Feb. 6.

The others accused of involvement in the kidnapping—Alma Pacido, Ely Imperial, Allan Pavia, Dodong Adolfo and Benjie Mabanag—are at large.

"Irresistible inquiries, there are compelling justifiable reasons for ordering a stay of the schedule executions of [Lara and Lucapas], in view of the arrest of other named individuals who are co-accused in the said kidnapping case and the surfacing of a witness claiming the innocence of [Lara]... Others may surface, too,

ETDP chairperson, 14 campaign directors did not say so but their role in death row said it for them. In photo are envoys from the Netherlands, Robert Wyns (left) and Jan de Rek of the European Commission.

European envoys' visit to death row irks Palace

By Jerome Aning and Margaux C. Orea

THE AMBASSADORS of 14 European states visited the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) in Muntinlupa City yesterday morning to inspect prison conditions, particularly on death row—and came away impressed.

Led by Jan de Kok, delegation head of the European Commission—the executive body of the European Union—the envoys made a brief tour of the death row compound by senior Undersecretary Dionisio Santiago, director of the Bureau of Corrections.

"They were polite, observant, orderly and very enthusiastic," NBP Superintendent Serafin Tesoro said. "They were satisfied that they left well informed about prison conditions in the Philippines, which are very much unlike those in their countries."

De Kok said in a press conference that he and his colleagues only wanted to familiarize themselves with the prison facilities. He said the delegation was impressed with the freedom of movement allowed the prisoners and the relative neatness of the compound.

"This visit was not specifically [illegible] for us to express our view on the death penalty," De Kok said. "We do not want to put any undue influence on anybody."

But the envoys' visit did not as well with Malacañang in particular that, according to President Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye, their position on the death penalty was "well taken."

"We are also expecting them to respect the President's stand on the issue as an internal matter with respect to Philippine justice and the rule of law," Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye reminded Mahmalberg's displeasure in a subsequent radio interview.

He said the Philippine government did not prohibit the visit to

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Another good start to the day with sunny skies and only a few clouds expected. But rain showers could also affect isolated portions of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao this afternoon or evening due to localized thunderstorms.

DFA downplays hasty departure of US envoy

By Jerome Aning

FORMER Affairs Secretary Delia Albert who previously denied that United States Ambassador Kenneth Brown had been called back to Washington as a result of a diplomatic dispute between the Philippines and the US.

Heistad did a favor by deciding to do with just to return to the country as the opposition big coalition of elections, said Albert.

Kenneth Brown, a Middle East expert who took up his post in Manila in February 2003, announced on his stuff on Wednesday that he was returning to Washington for several months to head a US government team overseeing the transition of Iraq to self-government and democracy.

The announcement triggered speculations that the US envoy was being recalled by his government after President Macapagal-Arroyo's angry response on Wednesday to the US justice department's "devastating" 30 Filipino citizens/residents/ex-officials on terrorist watch a decision concerning reimbursement held between US and Filipino television firms.

There were also speculations that Ambassador's leaving so close to the presidential elections was a show of "disappointment lack of confidence in Mr Macapagal-Arroyo that been a staunch ally of US President George Bush in his global anti-terror campaign.

Before leaving for Washington on Monday, Ambassador clarified that he was indeed a routine temporary and that he would return to resume his duties in Manila "after some months."

He did not specify how long he would be gone, but said his new job "will take years to accomplish."

US Secretary of State Colin Powell announced Ambassador Brown's transfer on Wednesday. Joseph Mussomeli, the deputy chief of mission, will run the embassy while the ambassador is away.

Albert said she wished Ambassador well in the job that entrusted him to Iraq and hoped he can take back to Manila."

"Now we have to willpower absolutely to have my support," said Albert, adding that Ambassador may "an important and effective partner in creating a bridge between our countries when normally [would not]." With a report from Aurora Lacsamana, Philippine Correspondent Manila.

Meralco critics press fight

By Jerry Esplanada and Ronnel Domingo

THE BATTLE isn't over yet.

So said Senator Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile yesterday as the opposition leader asked electricity consumers to continue the fight against the alleged corporate crimes of the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco).

At the same time, Enrile urged the government to look into Meralco's other transgressions against consumers.

In a phone interview, the senatorial candidate said he was "pleased with the Supreme Court ruling" which prevented Meralco from implementing the 12 centavo per kilowatt power rate increase starting this month.

The high electricity rates since day entered both Meralco and the Energy Regulatory Commission in disarray the "worst has prevailing", before the President from Debt Coalition and several other non-government groups, including Enrile's Philippine Consumer Watch, asked the court to intervene.

The presidential told like that the ERC approved last then 27 related to 2004, knowing was opposed to allow at least four million Meralco customers.

The increase was approved by the ERC supposedly to help the Lopez family-owned Meralco address its financial difficulties.

Also yesterday, an umbrella group of consumer organizations announced that Meralco made a report on all its billboards since Jan. 1 when it offered the increase, saying the should be increased to customers.

The utility giant said it would immediately stop the implementation of the rate hike following a Supreme Court order.

Meralco also said consumers who think either and the rate hike should be adjusted, but not on of the ERC issues guidelines on how to do this.

According to resolution by the People Opposed to Pay Hikes in Electricity Rates (Power), Meralco raised to collect P7.3 million daily.

Benjamin Reyes Jr., one of the commissioners of Power, said in an interview the figure was based on Meralco's 2003 sales of 5.28 billion kWh.

"The new hike is already reflected in this January's bill, but some of us have already paid," Reyes said. "We should know if the Supreme Court order also applies to consumers who have already paid Meralco with the higher rates."

"This is another complication stemming from the Energy Regulatory Commission's lousy grant of a rate hike for Meralco," Reyes said.

He how ERC granted Meralco the provisional authority (PA) in June to June by 12 centavos starting January prior to public hearings to determine whether the utility should be allowed to do so.

Meralco is actually asking for a rate increase of 13.58 centavos per kWh.

"Meralco should refund the collection of the added 12 centavos it should be barred from using the increase because the money still does not belong to the consumers," Reyes said.

Power also called on Congress to strip the ERC of its powers to grant provisional rate hikes, saying that the ERC could abuse the confidence of solicited like Meralco.

"We have seen that the granting of a provisional authority for rate hikes is grossly abused at the expense of consumers," Reyes said.

In a statement, Senator president Juan Ponce Enrile said: "As we have noted, we will abide by the Supreme Court's conclusions and will immediately stop the implementation of the rate hike," Ponce Enrile said.

At the same time, the utility asked for a speedy resolution of the case.

The Supreme Court issued the "status quo" order while it hears the petition of civic organizations to declare unconstitutional the portion of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act's empowering rates, which give the ERC the power to grant certain provisional authority to increase rates, and to nullify the authority that the ERC gave Meralco.

The Supreme Court had set the case for oral arguments on Jan. 27.

Erap boys made ₱1B in PCI-Equitable deal, says solon

By Cynthia D. Balana, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Michael Lim Ubac

ERAP PROPERTY Policy (Lakas-CMD), Surigao del Sur's point the charged that officials in the Estrada administration made P1 billion in kickbacks from the purchase by the Social Security System of its 20 percent stake in Equitable PCIBank in 1999.

Pichay said the House committee on banks and financial intermediaries should investigate the SSS acquisition of the stake, and not the recent sale of the same block to Banco de Oro which is owned by small magnate Henry Sy.

"We fully agree that there should be a probe, but this should be on the anomalous purchase by the SSS, and even the GSIS (Government Service Insurance System), of the stake in Equitable PCIBank during the time of Estrada," he said.

Pichay said the investigation should focus on the pre-government financial institutions (GFIs) being forced by Malacañang to support the purchase of PCIBank from the Lopez and Ongpin families by the private-sector Equitable Banking Corp. of tycoon Lucio Tan, who was Estrada's friend.

In 1999, he said, the SSS bought its 20 percent stake in the troubling Equitable PCIBank at P75 per share with the GSIS also buying 10 percent of the bank.

Pichay said the deal was pushed by former Malacañang chief Edgardo Angara in the interest of "corporate greed" from an Estrada friend.

The key is, Angara received a huge share for the GSIs, costing a drop in their position and also an excess of debt capital base, and weakened their ability to adequately provide benefits and insurance coverage to their members, Pichay said.

He charged that certain government officials supported the deal for huge sums in kickbacks, with one top official alone supposedly making P500 million, but did not identify the officials, however.

"This was one of the biggest victims of the Estrada administration—all for the benefit of a privileged few [who received] almost a billion pesos in kickbacks," Pichay said.

Pichay said that he, Angara, Estrada's spokesman Ricardo Puno Jr. and other officials were summoned by then Malacañang chief of staff Aguinaldo Jimenez to discuss the deal.

He said that Angara was the one who pushed for the deal, saying it would be in the interest of economic recovery.

Pichay said that he was told by Angara that the deal was "ordered from above."

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FPJ charged with faking birth, citizenship papers

By Leila B. Salaverria

ACTOR and presidential candidate Ronnie Poe Jr. was charged yesterday with two counts of falsification of public documents for allegedly falsifying his birth certificate and forging the signatures on it, and one count of perjury for claiming he is a natural-born Filipino.

The charges were filed before the Manila Prosecutor's Office by Manny Mondejar, president of the non-government organization Alliance Member So Longgod Isinagpas Towards Awareness (Amboselect) and lawyers Alfonso Gillesania and Melanio Balayan.

The three denied affiliation with any political party.

How else they have filed a second complaint, Villaroya said in an interview, "For usurpation" for a Filipino citizen and claim his name."

In the 35-page joint complaint, the petitioners noted that Poe's birth certificate, which had been "merely inserted" into Manila's civil registry, indicated that his father was Filipino. However, they said, the elder Poe's marriage contract showed that he was Spanish.

They pointed out that poor, "non-existent" in the time of the actor's birth, had been used for the signatures of the attending physician and civil registrar on the document, making them conclude that Poe had forged them. Likewise, they said the typewriter model used to furnish the information had definitely not been available in 1939, when the certificate was filed.

The petitioners added that it was unlike all other birth certificates filed at the time, most of which were accomplished by hand. They said the time that were typewritten—on a machine already in use then—had "jumping letters, uneven insertions ... and irregular ink pressure."

But as "highly suspect," they said, were the registry number and the town seal. While the document was filed in the latter part of 1939, the town seal was issued in the early part of that year.

Bedridden's petition refuted the earlier arguments of private lawyer Feliciano Bautista, who said Poe had lied in his certificate of residence when he said he was natural and born citizen.

Both the actor's parents were aliens, the three maintained, since his mother, Bessie Kelley, was an American citizen.

They said Gil was in illegal marriage to her, because his father had been married to a Dutch woman Grace when he wed Kelley in such, according to the 1930 Constitution. The actor would have had to acquire the citizenship of his mother in fact, the petitioners said, Grace filed charges of concubinage and bigamy against the elder Poe.

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"Taken together with the untruthful statements made by the respondent in his Certificate of Birth," they concluded, this was "guilty of falsifying or causing the falsification" of the all-important document.

Confused, Sandigan calls Erap on US trip

By Armand N. Nocum

JUSTYNAP! Is our court, Erap?

The Sandiganbayan yesterday expressed wonder at President Joseph Estrada's choosing to flee up over and fix all the confusion created by his conflicting statements on his US trip for knee surgery.

In a resolution, the Sandiganbayan's special division directed Philippine National Police chief Hermogenes Ebdane to deliver the order/resolution to the anti-graft court within 10 working days.

It spokesperson in the court's special division had earlier said Estrada's flip-flopping had muddled the issue. "This trial is confused," the Inquirer reported.

Government prosecutors, however, have rejected Estrada's new charging plan to ask the court to reverse its Dec. 23 ruling which allowed Estrada to leave his house-arrested in the United States.

In a telephone interview, Rivera said the court seems to draw things up with Estrada before it, since a ruling on his lawyers' motion to court has already been set for Jan. 23 and he told the members of his police escorts from four to two.

But after Estrada's court-appointed lawyer filed the motion, the former chief executive said he was wondering musing in the country until after the May 10 elections in order to help the close friend, actor Fernando Poe Jr., get elected to the presidency.

Estrada also said that the $1.25-million fee demanded by his American doctor, Christopher Moss, for the operation was too high and he was having problems securing on American visa.

Later, he took back his statement, stating he would no longer fear the prosecution's motion to seek the court's permission to visit the ex-president going to other France, Canada or Japan for the operation.

Government prosecutors, however, said that all the change in plans made it look like Estrada was not really in pain, but simply eager to go abroad to escape like most Filipinos do.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said, "He sounds more like a tourist out to see the sights and have a good time than one who was going out for medical reasons."

In a telephone interview, Villa-Ignacio said his office will ask Estrada's hanging plans to support its motion asking the court to nullify its ruling which allowed the defeated ex-President to leave.

In a resolution released on Tuesday, Villa-Ignacio also cited the view of former Justice Secretary Estrada that allowing Estrada to leave was not only legally questionable but jurisprudence since there were many doctors in the Philippines who could just as competently operate on him.

In a commentary in the Inquirer on Monday, Inquirer also said that there had been no deliberation among the the justices who decided to Estrada's motion, then had been no effort to inform the public in the proceedings and Estrada was a flight risk because he does not recognize the authority of the court.

Solicitor Estrada described the Sandiganbayan decision to let Estrada leave as a joke.

Fugitive bank exec back

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE FORMER manager of a Manila-based bank wanted for qualified theft of P61 million was brought back to the country yesterday after admitting himself to a court in Los Angeles, California.

Jerry Espino Jr., through his lawyer Raymond Fortun, denied that he had stolen the money, adding that he was misled into using his ID when he took out the accusations against him.

"The charges against him are totally false and already fabricated," Fortun told reporters yesterday, adding that he would file a motion before the court on his behalf to have it quashed.

He arrived on a Philippine Airlines flight at 7 a.m. yesterday, accompanied by National Bureau of Investigation agents Lucas de Leon and Constantino Jones, who had left for Los Angeles on Monday to bring him home.

According to Fortun, Espino had been warned against going back to the Philippines which is why he had stayed in the U.S. But when he learned that the Philippines had sought his extradition, he voluntarily returned to the country. He further added that it is not true that he took the money and moved to another account, and then forward the money to another account in a US bank, as alleged against Ty.

Reports from the NBI indicate that he had been charged with qualified theft before Branch 32 of the Manila Regional Trial Court, which issued a warrant for his arrest in 2001. To allegedly committed the accounts of the bank's customers from one manager's checks, and then transferred them to an account in the US, where he allegedly withdrew the amount.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

METRO

Editor Abelardo S. Manalay

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ANOMALOUS CONTRACT FALLOUT

Automation fiasco worries pols

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

THE MESS created by the automation contract entered into by the Commission on Elections (Comelec) for automated polls has created problems for local candidates.

Apart from worrying of possible cheating, candidates have to dig deeper into their pockets to contain the long wait resulting from the manual counting of votes.

Before the Supreme Court nullified Comelec's P1.265 billion contract with a private consortium for the automation of the May 10 elections, most candidates had looked forward to a speedy counting of the ballots.

But with the return to manual counting, they would have to spend more for watchers just to increase the chances that the votes for them would be counted, said acting Malabon mayor Jaypee Nolasco.

He said manual counting increased the risk of fraud. To address this, Nolasco said politicians would just field more poll watchers, requiring more expenses.

Watchers are paid P200 to P500 per day.

In Caloocan City, Mayor Boy Malonzo said counting could drag for months and would involve vote tabulators. This he was saddened by the return of manual counting.

Iskinsyudad City mayor Bobbit Carlos said automated elections would have been "more credible but with the drawbacks, no one will have any choice but to accept the fact that the country will still have manual counting in May."

But Navotas mayor Toby Tiangco said going back to traditional counting should not alarm anybody. Instead, he said politicians should work together to ensure the elections would be peaceful and honest.

"I think the Comelec can ensure an orderly election," he added.

MET PRESS runs left inside the office of the Comelec in Quezon City, as suspicious sorts run some errors loose on the pavement in preparation for the May elections.

32,000 odd voters turn up in Pasig

By Luige del Puerto

ABOUT 32,000 "questionable" voters have turned up in the final Commission on Elections' official voters' list for Pasig City and local body seems to mind, according to the camp of Nasig City Rep. Henry Lanot.

The voters either possess questionable data or omitted important facts in their registration forms, according to lawyer Joey Bautagna, Lanot's chief of staff.

Lanot is running for city mayor.

The rise in the number of voters in the city, Bautagna said, is "statistically improbable."

As a result, the camp sentinel's supporters yesterday went to the Pasig City municipal trial court to file a petition to exclude the 32,000 voters in the May polls, Bautagna said.

Comelec records showed that those 32,000 people have either registered or transferred to the city, bringing the total number of voters to close to 400,000.

But District I Assistant Comelec Officer Ismael Mandaluyan explained that the odd voters might have failed to state their complete addresses only in the second copy of their application form.

"Each application form has two copies...the voters keep the first copy we keep the second copy," she said. "Each voter must go to a voting precinct, which counts for us the actual basis in compiling addresses."

She also said many Filipinos have the same name, so double or multiple entries are expected.

The key to that is their birth dates, Mandaluyan said.

She added that "some applicants either don't know the year they were born, or are illiterate."

"But we can't reject them because of that," Mandaluyan said. "Students also did not recite their birthdays."

Cheap chicken

FEELING: food never high chickens prices? Here a good news.

Members of the the Philippine Association of Broiler Integrators (PAB) will be deploying selling more frozen dressed chicken in Metro Manila at affordable as P85 per kilo.

Chicken chunks cuts and other products such as hotdogs will also be available at reasonable prices at the mobile stores.

PAB president Imelda Kim Malabrigo said the decision to field the rolling stores was in response to a directive by Agriculture Secretary Luis E Lorenzo Jr. for them to help bring down retail prices of chicken, which sell for P120 to P140 in regular stores.

PAB members include San Miguel Foods, Inc.(Magnolia Farms Agro-Ventures, Universal Robina and Vitarich. Christine Cuyfuco

MetroBriefs

Girls rescued

THE MAYORS, Bureau of Investigation rescued five women, four of them minors, from an alleged prostitution ring in Quezon City. Police arrested Glee Tang-co, owner of the Expo 2 Talent Management on Katipunan Road, and Don Antonio Heights. The BOI said the company's office poses as a talent agency but actually "lures girls who want to be models or actresses. After the girls agree, they are kept at the 'Tang Tongan Saloon,' where they are allegedly sold to customers for P15,000 to P50,000. Julie Aglasanova

Quick thinking

THE POLICE collared two robbers in Mandaluyong City Wednesday night. James Reyes, 20, and Michael Tupaen, 18, both of Bagac Street, Jesus Dela Peña, Tondo, Manila, announced a holdup inside the jeepney on Shaw Boulevard at about 10 p.m. When the driver saw what was happening, he pulled the vehicle in front of the Chong Hua Hospital gate. The suspects were collared after a brief chase. The driver, however, was not identified. Luige del Puerto

Pasay fire, again

BARELY a day after fire engulfed houses in Pasay City, another fire broke out early yesterday morning, and razed 60 homes in Barangay San Antonio. Its cause still remains undetermined. Some 60 families were rendered homeless and some P5 million in property was destroyed. The blaze, reportedly due to faulty electrical wiring, began at 1:30 a.m. and was put out at 8:30 a.m. Tarra Quismorio

Burger Machine rob

ROBBERS RAID village watchmen in Barangay Langpan, Marikina City, robbed Vincencio Abrogan, 21, and Ruel Cyrus Laguerta, 19, after robbing a Burger Machine outlet of P900 at 3 a.m. yesterday. Abrogan asked at branch of Sun Life's Round Evangelista, 20, while Laguerta acted as lookout. Oliver Teodoro Jr.

Victoria reunion

MEMBERS of Victoria School Foundation Batch Sixty-8 meet at the Temple Bar restaurant along Tomas Morato, Quezon City, starting 1 p.m. tonight to discuss their reunion. All 1,000 Batch '68 are invited.

REAL ESTATE FINANCE & INVESTMENT ANALYSIS

Jan. 26, 1-5 PM/Feb. 2&3, 8am. Location: Ateneo Professional Schools, Salcedo Village, Makati City. Fee: P3,500 (inclusive of lunch, snacks, handouts, certificate). For reservations, call 426-6001 loc. 5005 or 426-6104. Fax: 426-6116. e-mail: ateneo@urban.com.ph

URBAN INSTITUTE OF REAL ESTATE

Dogs get beaten up, shot, stabbed in QC

By Vea Sarmen

DOGS appear to be no man's friend—at least not to some officials of Barangay New Era in Bilihan, Quezon City.

According to New Era residents, some barangay officials in turn have been shooting and stabbing dogs not only in the streets, but even within the dog owners' property.

They also reported cases of canines being beaten up by the barangay officials' security aides.

Worse, these incidents have been observed right in front of the barangay hall in New Era, according to residents.

The inhumane treatment of dogs angered members of the group Compassion and Responsibility Toward Animals (Care) on Tuesday to go to New Era and investigate the reported cases.

That night, Care members learned from the residents that some barangay security men would bang the animals on trees, running them and even "poisoning" them by forcing them to "inhale" during their drinking sprees.

The residents told members of the animal welfare group that they have lodged complaints with the barangay chief, Leonora Sison.

But they claimed that Sison has not lifted a finger to act on their complaints.

Dalby A. Jhon Abrenica Jimez denied that he knew of, much less got involved in, the alleged inhumane treatment of dogs in his community.

He said that he had only instructed residents to keep their pets from wandering in the streets.

Sison also assured the residents that he would look into their complaints.

But the residents are not keeping their hopes up.

"This has been going on for several months now [but Chairman] just kept on ignoring us," the residents said.

They believe that Sison would go out of his way to protect his men.

A 51-year-old resident of St. John Street, meanwhile, has had his pet Samantha, who was shot and killed in October last year.

He said that when he heard a shot around 5 a.m., he got out of his bed, got out to check, and saw his dog bleeding in front of his gate.

He found out from the security guard that Samantha was shot with a .22-caliber pistol.

Immediately, he reported the incident to barangay officials," the resident said. "I followed it up several times, but I got no response."

He said he simply dropped the case because he "got tired."

Jhonie, the pet of a resident dentist, could have suffered the same fate as Samantha's, had not the dentist noticed the dog and fed it a meal laden with poison.

A 30-year-old engineer said he saw two barangay officials one Sunday afternoon, slicing the neck of a stray dog with a kitchen knife. The men later roasted the carcass in a nearby vacant lot and served it as their "pulutan."

"I pity the dog, but I could not do anything because I didn't want to get into trouble with [the officials]," the engineer said in Filipino. "They were allegedly drunk."

The latest abuse happened last Sunday.

A 15-year-old boy said he saw the body of a dead dog hanging from a tree in front of the barangay hall.

Several hours later, the boy said, he saw men "release it (...) as one hanging out at the barangay hall," tossing the dog at an adjacent lot.

Nestor Cruzamig, an active member of Care, said our barangay security men had admitted to them that he was one of those who committed the dog.

Another Care member, Jenny Lagera, said they were receiving complaints that the barangay watchmen would shoot the dogs even if they were already inside their owners' houses.

"[The barangay men] were unaware that there is such a thing as the Animal Welfare Act, Republic Act 8485," he explained.

It just of Section 6 of RA 8485, it is stated that it is "unlawful for any person to torture any animal, or neglect to provide adequate care, sustenance or shelter, or inadequate any animal".

The Care members said that they are still discussing what action to take against the officials.

"For now, we have asked Sison to present his men so that the residents can identify who among the officials are responsible," Cruzamig said.

Lagera said Sison has agreed to let Care help them instruct the animal population by spaying and neutering the animals, instead of killing them.

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BF says he's not running

By T. Quismundo

HE HAS no more plans of running in May, and he has not changed his mind.

Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando denied reports that he had a change of heart and once again plans to run for vice president in the coming elections.

"I don't know where the reports came from. I don't want to talk. It will just push me deeper into a hole," said Fernando in a low tone, looking puzzled.

Reports said the MMDA chair had been asked to take the place of Herminio Aquino as running mate of former senator and Education Secretary Raul Roco, Aksyon Demokratiko presidential candidate.

Fernando yesterday declined interviews with the media. But he obliged to give a few comments on the issue on his way out of his office.

"Maybe it was just a bum steer," said Fernando.

JI in Singapore wiped out

SINGAPORE—Singapore authorities claim to have succeeded in eliminating the local branch of Jemaah Islamiyah but opposition and human rights groups balked over Thursday as the groaning list of suspects being detained without trial.

Singapore's Home Affairs Ministry announced on Wednesday that the number of accused Islamic militants being detained without trial since a government crackdown began in 2001 had risen to 37.

Most are alleged members of the JI regional terrorist group and all are being held under the controversial Internal Security Act (ISA), which allows for people detained on national security threats to be detained for two years without trial.

The two-year period for the first batch of 13 people detained in the crackdown expired this month but the government said on Wednesday their imprisonment would continue for at least another two years.

Although an advisory board chaired by Supreme Court judge Chao Hick Tin reviewed their cases, the government did not explain why they would remain in detention. AFP

Payla, Camat zero in on slots

By Ray Lucero

PUERTO PRINCESA—Flyweight Violito Payla and middleweight Christopher Camat kept the flickering hopes of Team Philippines alive in the 22nd Asian Boxing Championships at the Puerto Princesa Coliseum here.

Payla got the better of three exchanges with Hanh Samuel Kim Byun late night to win, 36-30, while Camat handed Emir Ocal Ekrem in the dying seconds to edge Dalanzad Ahmed 30, 21-18.

Payla and Camat join welterweight Romeo Brin, a quarterfinal winner Wednesday night, in the semifinals.

The victories of Payla and Camat unsheathed the boxers disrobed last night. Or featherweight Arnold Ladon, lightweight Florencio Bruno, light flyweight Harmon Tabuzo and welterweight Fernan Arrem.

Talisayan yielded to reigning World Boxing Championships titlist Jon Zhiming of China, 36-32. Perez bowed to Dalanzaki Asghat of Ukrah, 28-17, while Arrem lost a close contest to Afghanistan's Ra Sharmad in the quarterfinals.

Regarding Kim's three-bob triple to mark with his rapid straight-of-center counter, the 25-year-old Payla joined his Batman for entry to the third round to assure himself of at least a bronze medal.

Although step ahead in the scorecards, the Cagayan de Oro native gamely rocked Hoan with right to the fourth round and won clamoring him when the final buzzer sounded.

Payla now faces tribesman Ts Sukhoy Dorjpurev in the semifinal on Friday two hour shot will awaiting winner in the inferno Olympics. The vanquished fighter it out with the other semifinal loser for the third Olympic slot in the weight division.

The Filipino jubilation after Payla's victory was short-lived, however, as Lalita bowed down to Kazakhstan's Ghulalitov Galib, 33-31. Galib also later coded by 6SE (C) Bachrose dropped Corsico Ouchinus D. in the 2003 King's Cup in Thailand.

Wednesday night action saw Brin reach closer to a third straight Olympic stint, by beating Kazakhstan's Kuzyashanov Gama, 28-24.

Brin, the event seeder among the three men, from Philippines, is slated to meet China's Bai Bingbing. The Filipino qualifies outright in this year's inferno Games with another victory.

As it hit 17-7 mid-set now Ventura Southeast Asian Games champion Monsa Kosanpanmong of Thailand during the inauguration fight on Monday Brin tagged Yenna with stunning punches in the first two rounds.

Ahead by 10 points entering the third round, Brin was unanswered as jun arrows and numerous chances like a solid hit to the stomach left the Filipino gasping for breath, and the Kazakh smashed relentlessly but harshly.

Lol. Dr. Gov. Joel T. Reyes, Palawan's gave Brin, who has not elected this island province with-with Ogbeilaceed 7 year-old son, landed a resounding round of applause when the decision was announced.

"Nagpapasalamat po ako sa ating mga kababayan, lalo na kina Mayor Dilmond Hagedorn at Governor Reyes sa kanilang suporta sa akin. Eh like to thank my parishioners, especially Mayor Hagedorn and Governor Reyes for their support," said Brin. "Pipilitin kong di ako mahiga (I will try not to disappoint them)."

HARD FIGHTING Bros (left) lashes arms with Kazakhstan's Kuzyashanov en route to victory. RAFF ANGELES

RP keg stars top pick in Lion City

By Mgtc. Anthony Reyes

SINGAPORE—To Perlo Granger, the Philippines' collegiate and youngsters teamless coach, the country's entrant this year's strike Asian Bowling Trial Games Qatar tournament is a statement to the Filipinos' competitive spirit.

"This is taking the (Philippines) team's training to a higher level," said the 28 year-old Granger before the team plunged into the round-robin eliminations of the event, which formally got underway in the Joob National Bowling Resort and Country Club here yesterday.

Head coach John-son Cheng said the Philippines has been ranked No. 1 in this three last year.

After winning four golds in the 2001 Southeast Asian Games, Filipinos took the doubles gold in the 2002 Busan Head Cheng Improvement and RJ Bautista, captained the World Cup through C.J.Suarez and the World PSJ Bowling championship Indoor trio last year.

Cheng expressed confidence that the Filipinos will fare very well there.

"We have good line conditions, which mean we can expect high scores," he said. "And the players are all well-prepared."

The tournament which [illegible] Asian female bowler of the year, and Cecilia Yap...are competing in the championships and are hoping to build on their rich experience in international events to finish strongly here.

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PNP vows to stay neutral

By Blanche Rivera and Clemian V. Piguerra

THE PHILIPPINE National Police yesterday assured the public that it would "try to best" remain neutral in the May elections amid fears that some politicians would use the police and military to rig the May elections.

PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane said that the police would watch out for people who are likely to make trouble if the results of the elections are not to their liking. He did not name names.

The PNP would deploy one-third of its force, or some 40,000 police, nationwide starting May 10 to ensure that there would be clean, honest and orderly elections. Ebdane said that the shift from compressed to extended shifting due to the recent decision of the Supreme Court to junk the 972.3-billion automation contract has affected the preparations of the PNP for the May polls.

He said the police force would behave to the letter and be disciplined all over the country for two weeks, unlike the original plan to have three months' the elections and campaigning for less than a week. After the election period, the police would be on a shifting schedule to ensure peace.

"The Constitution states that we must be apolitical and we always do not bent," Ebdane said in an interview at the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines office in Manila where he met with CBCP president Orozco Archbishop Fernando Capalla.

Ebdane remains optimistic despite reports that there are at least six police generals said to be supporting presidential aspirant despite the standing policy requiring him to remain apolitical.

A senior PNP official identified four of the generals as Directors Lucas Bersamin, Victor Ibarra, Reynaldo Acop, and Chief Supt. Francisco Zubia. The officials held key positions during Sen. Panfilo Lacson's run as PNP chief and have been closely identified with the presidential aspirant.

Two other generals are said to be supporting the candidacy of former Education Secretary Raul Roco and opposition standard-bearer Fernando Poe Jr., respectively. Deputy Ombudsman Emmanuel Carpio, for example, said, Roco's highly controversial father the top-ranking PNP official during last December. The Ombudsman is currently a deputy at a divorced past.

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Padilla blames Angara for ouster from FPJ ticket

By Cynthia D. Balana and Michael Lim Ubac

SENATE Minority Leader Carlos Padilla yesterday said his ouster from the senatorial ticket of the opposition Koalisyon ng Pagbabalatang Pilipino was engineered and that he was not KNP presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s [illegible] Angara who masterminded it.

Padilla, who was replaced in the KNP ticket by former Sorsogon Rep. Salvador Escudero, said he was not informed of his ouster, though he was able to confirm it.

Asked why he was ousted because he refused to abandon Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, the candidate of the LDP faction headed by Rep. Agapito Aquino which is feuding with the LDP's Angara faction.

Angara had been included in the KNP slate as a "common candidate" of the KNP and the LDP Aquino faction.

"Angara wants me to abandon Ping and declare that I'm with him. But I cannot do that, you know. Why do I have to choose between Ping's group and him where my bank of being in the ticket was I am a common candidate," he said.

At a Manila Pavilion for an overnight, Padilla said he was going through with his candidacy and announced his objection to Angara who he said was "ruthless and projected to become the country's next chief executive."

He said he would be happy to join Lacson in his campaign even as, saying it would be convenient to campaign "without worry hoggage."

He would have the luxury of time to explain his vision and program during the campaign unlike other senatorial candidates from the administration and opposition tickets who would only be given five minutes to talk, Padilla said.

Reached by mobile phone in his home, Pangasinan where the was having "under-covered" consultations, KNP spokesperson Rod Reyes said he did not know the "actual reasons" for Padilla's replacement.

SEA-DOO
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Boots Anson-Roa makes it official

Maricis P. Marfil

ACTRESS Boots Anson-Roa yesterday formalized her bid to run for the Senate, accepting one of the candidacies of the fledgling opposition Pilipino party.

The 59-year-old actress, who declared intent to form Elito Coalition Anson-Roa, filed her certificate of candidacy around 3 p.m., with an attached affidavit of withdrawal from the Nacionalista Party, who filed his candidacy for the Senate under KNP on Jan. 3.

A nomination issued by KNP Chair Edgardo Angara also accompanied Roa's candidacy and with that, she became an official member of the KNP slate.

GMA accepts resignation of adviser

By Jaime Laya and Jaime Flor Cruz

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has accepted the resignation of her adviser on special concerns, Norberto Gonzales, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye announced yesterday.

"He said he wanted to have more flexibility and elbow room in the way he will be campaigning in the election but he expressed full support for the President," Bunye said.

Bunye, however, would not elaborate on Gonzales' reason for quitting, saying they do not go into details when the two talked yesterday.

Gonzales submitted his resignation letter to the President on Tuesday. He said he would be supporting Mrs. Arroyo, but not her running mates, Sen. Noli de Castro.

Gonzales' office said they would delay any comment until Gonzales had issued a full statement.

Gonzales, chair of the Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas, has nominated former Cebu GMO spokesperson Ocharon Atienza as a candidate for senator of the PDSP.

Atienza was dropped from the administration's Cusi slate when the Presidency and former Gen. Mirriam Defensor-Santiago, Sen. John Osmeña, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon and former Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado ran the coalition's senatorial lineup.

The WORLD

Edited by Lucerna B. Cuaso

13 people believed killed by bird flu, says Vietnam

HANOI—Vietnam said Thursday 13 people were believed to have died from bird flu as tests focused on whether the virus could jump from person to person and ultimately cause a global epidemic.

The avian flu has killed millions of chickens in Vietnam, South Korea and Japan in the past month, triggering a health scare across Asia where many countries have banned poultry imports from affected areas.

So far the only human infections from the H5N1 virus have been in Vietnam where authorities have recorded 18 suspected cases and 13 deaths.

In the latest cases, an adult died on Wednesday and three people showing symptoms were isolated at a Hanoi hospital.

"Eighteen people have been found to have contracted influenza A, of whom 13 died, including 11 kids and two adults," the official Vietnam News Agency said.

The infections are believed to have come from contact with droppings from sick birds, and both World Health Organization and Vietnamese experts have stressed there is no evidence so far to show the virus can spread from person to person.

However, the WHO, which has confirmed three deaths from the H5 N1 virus and is closing tests on some other cases, has warned of dire consequences if the virus mutates.

Prof. Huong Thuy Long, director of the Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology at the Vietnamese health ministry, said the Vietnamese authorities were taking the watching very seriously.

"If the virus continues to evolve it could become contagious between humans. We would then see a very rapid, epidemic tendency," he said.

Analysts so far suppress all the panic from the H5N1 virus came from animals.

"If it gets out of human origin, then would be a far greater danger of human to human transmission. But it appears this is not the case, which is positive," said Hussein Bridoni, WHO representative in Hanoi.

Another positive sign is that so far no medical staff treating bird flu patients have become infected, unlike with last year's outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome where many doctors and nurses became sick.

However experts have by no means ruled out person-to-person transmission, especially as the virus has struck several members of a single family so far.

The first adult to die last December was the mother of a young girl who died several days earlier. Hospital sources also said the three latest cases were family members of the aunt who died on Wednesday.

In South Korea experts have so far been unable to confirm whether the source of the ill news was animal or human.

Smaller outbreaks in South Korea and Japan, which have yet to be confirmed, have created a new anxiety in Asia which is also coping with the re-emergence of SARS in southern China.

Hong Kong, where bird flu killed six people in 1997, has banned all live poultry from affected areas. Cambodia, Thailand, Taiwan and Indonesia have also announced restrictions on imports.

In South Korea, the highly contagious disease reappeared after hitting 33 areas nationwide last month despite a cull of 1.6 million chickens and ducks. AFP

NO TAKERS—Poultry traders sit behind cages of chicken waiting for customers as poultry trading dropped sharply at the Go Hom City's Tuan Chau Chicken poultry market, Jan. 15. UN experts warned they told the outbreak troubling Asia has the potential to be more deadly than SARS and that Vietnam—the country worst hit so far—was ill-prepared to cope. AFP

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War in Iraq unnecessary —Kennedy

WASHINGTON—A leading opposition US politician accused President George W. Bush of having betrayed his people with an unnecessary conflict in Iraq, where a war bomb killed four people outside a police station.

In other violence five Britishers and a Turk on a convoy of oil workers supplies were killed in a guerrilla attack on Wednesday, and the Pentagon said a growing proportion of "non-hostile" US military deaths in Iraq were due to suicide.

Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy said Bush had "misled the nation from the first. It's as clear to put a spin on the truth to justify a war that could well become one of the worst blunders in more than two centuries of American foreign policy."

Bush, seeking reelection in November, ordered US-led forces to invade Iraq last March to topple Saddam Hussein after accusing the Iraqi leader of possessing weapons of mass destruction. Officials said Baghdad had contacts with al-Qaeda.

A US official said a document found with Saddam when he was captured in December asserted his supporters to be more robust in stepping up with foreigners arriving in Iraq to fight Americans.

"The implication is ... he isn't entirely tired from guys," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Washington has blamed Saddam supporters and foreign Islamic militants, including al-Qaeda fighters, for attacks on US-led forces in Iraq since Saddam was ousted in April.

No weapons of mass destruction have been found so far.

Dentinch said rebel rockets downed twelve bombs found this month did not contain any chemical substances as originally suspected.

The US military said the people were killed and 20 hurt in the car bombing in the center town of Baquba, about 65 km north of Baghdad. Many victims were Iraqi police.

The US military said it had captured a former leading figure in Saddam's Baath party from south of Baghdad who was on Washington's list of 55 most wanted Iraqis.

The remain of aggression operations in the south, the US military monitor the capture of Khaisa Sabaa al-Mohammad, number 14 on the most wanted list," Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said a news conference in Baghdad.

The Pentagon said 61 least 22 US troops had committed suicide in Iraq, representing one in seven American "non-hostile" deaths since March. AFP

Suicide rate among US soldiers in Iraq rising

WASHINGTON—US soldiers in Iraq are killing themselves in a high rate despite efforts by special teams sent to help troops deal with combat stress, the defense department's top doctor said Wednesday.

Meanwhile, about 2,300 soldiers who have returned from the war on terrorism are having to wait for medical care in bases in the United States, said Dr. William Winkenwerder, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. The problem of troops on "medical extension" is likely to get worse as the Pentagon reduces hundreds of thousands of troops in Iraq and out of Iraq this spring, he said.

Both estimates illustrate the stresses placed on the troops and the military's health system by the war in Iraq.

Suicide has become such a pressing issue that Army brass are sometimes wary to say how fast war-to-see if anything more would be done to prevent troops from killing themselves. The Army also began offering more counseling to returning troops after several soldiers from Fort Bragg, N.C., killed their wives and themselves after returning home from the war.

Winkenwerder said the military has documented 23 suicides during 2003 among troops involved in the Iraq war. Eighteen of those were Army soldiers, he said.

That's a suicide rate for soldiers in Iraq of about 13.5 per 100,000, Winkenwerder said. In 2002, the Army reported an overall suicide rate of 10.9 per 100,000.

The overall suicide rate nationwide during 2001 was 10.7 per 100,000, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

By contrast, just 20 military personnel killed themselves during the 1991 Gulf War, although that conflict only lasted about a month. The Army reported 102 suicides during 1991 for a rate of 14.4 per 100,000. The army's highest suicide rate in recent years came in 1993, when the rate was 13.7 per 100,000.

The Marine Corps has the military's highest suicide rate. Last year, the Marines' rate was 12.6 per 100,000. During 1993, the Marines' rate was 20.9 per 100,000.

In 1991, there was 69 military service members and 1 loss.

The military sees suicide every deal's and some of those probes may be incomplete, meaning the actual suicide rate could be even higher, Winkenwerder said. He said health officials haven't identified any common threads among the confirmed suicides.

"We don't see any trend there that tells us that there's more we might be doing," Winkenwerder told a briefing meeting of Pentagon reporters.

The military has nine combat stress control units, including four to treat mental health problems, and each division has a psychiatrist, psychologist and social worker, Winkenwerder said. Of more than 10,000 troops medically evacuated from Iraq, between 800 and 900 were evacuated because they were in need of mental health problems, he said.

The military prefers to treat mental health problems such as depression by keeping troops in their regular duties while they get counseling and psychiatric medications, Winkenwerder said. Less than one percent of the troops in Iraq are treated for mental issues during an average week, he said. AP

Israeli Army seals off Gaza after suicide bomb attack

JERUSALEM—The Israeli Army sealed off the Gaza Strip on Thursday following a suicide bombing which killed four Israelis in a border crossing, the military and police announced.

Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the measure was a sign of the government's determination to prevent "terrorism" after the suicide bomb assault at a main crossing point between the Gaza Strip and Israel on Wednesday.

"We have never let ourselves halt our struggle against terrorism, and we will carry on to strive to prevent attacks like the one carried out on Wednesday," he said on Israeli radio.

The Army announced said "In line with a political decision and in view of the situation, the whole of the Gaza Strip has been totally sealed off."

"Movement (in and from Israel) will be facilitated for humanitarian cases, in coordination with (Israeli Palestinian) liaison officer," the Army statement said.

The decision followed an attack in which a young Palestinian mother blew herself up at the main border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel, shooting a four-month old in suicide attacks by the radical Hamas movement, and killing four Israelis. At least seven other Israelis were injured.

Separately, Palestinian security sources said the Israeli Army had entered both the town of Jenin and the nearby Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank early on Thursday.

The sources said a group of some 40 Israeli jeeps and armored vehicles were involved in exchanges of fire with Palestinian militants when they entered Jenin town.

In the Jenin refugee camp, another convoy of some 20 Israeli vehicles appeared a curfew and carried out house searches, the sources said.

Palestinian sources also reported that Israeli forces had blown up a house near occupied by an activist of the Palestinian group Hamas after they failed to get inside.

They said the house, in the northern West Bank town of Tulkarem, had been occupied by Tareq Abed Nabbo, who died in a clash with Israeli forces. AFP

Iran's supreme leader moves to defuse crisis

TEHRAN—Iran's supreme leader ordered hardliners to heed the historic legislative vote of reformers over votes, ordering parliament commissions to review laws banning the publishing of information abroad of newspaper publications and websites.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's blunt intervention came less on the heels of a threat by reformist President Mohammad Khatami to hold a mass resignation of MPs and government ministers unless a deadlock created a standing political crisis.

"The Guardians Council has a good opportunity to reverse the [unfavorable perception and public] anger with the law," state radio quoted Khamenei as telling members of the body ranking as the country's highest authorities.

Khamenei, who has the final say on all matters of state, said in the case of MPs who are currently sitting in parliament—61 of whom had been barred from re-election—"if their grounds are proved in the past, this principle [that they are still competent as] lawmakers [will be preserved]."

He also told the Guardians Council to go over the law in a speedy process and that "together with negative points, positive points should also be taken into account."

The body is a branch of Iran's religious right and has the power to vet all legislation and candidates for public office. Khamenei directly or indirectly appoints all of the 12 members.

The supreme leader's impromptu conciliatory note is crucial in resolving the latest standoff, which looked set to flounder when the electoral vetting arm of the Council of Guardians (which had at the time 5,000 people hoping to stand for parliament) refu[se]d [to] ap[prove] [the] ban[ning] [of] 2,[3]00 [can]didates.

Most barred from standing are reformists, among them some of the movement's most prominent figures, and the step immediately sparked accusations of vote-rigging. One top reformist MP, Mohsen Mirdamadi, likened the move to a "coup d'etat."

Last Tuesday, reformists threw down the gauntlet with a threat that the mass resignations would take place.

A deputation of the reformist government, elected with massive majorities in past polls, would plunge Iran's fledgling democracy and theocracy into political chaos and fuel an economic crisis.

"We have a [common] fate. If one day we are asked to leave, then we will all leave, together," the usually mild-mannered president warned. AFP

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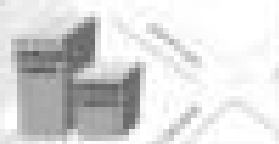

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Ebola may be spreading to humans through infected meat, study says

WASHINGTON—The Ebola virus has killed large numbers of chimpanzees, gorillas and antelope in west central African rainforests, so sick animals harvested as meat may be the source of the recent human outbreaks of the deadly disease.

Dr. William B. Karesh of the Wildlife Conservation Society said a study of outbreaks of Ebola disease in west central Africa shows that the virus is spreading into the human population most often by hunters who handle meat from infected animals.

After studying outbreaks that occurred from October 2001 to May 2003, Karesh said he and his team concluded that human outbreaks almost always are preceded by Ebola-related deaths of nonhuman animals.

Ebola is a hemorrhagic fever that kills most of its victims within a few days. In the final stages of the disease, patients start leaking blood from every orifice and eventually bleed to death. The death rate in humans is about 50 percent.

Karesh said the virus has been found in the bodies of chimpanzees, lowland gorillas and the duiker, a small, short-haired antelope. Before some outbreaks, he said that there were reports of large numbers of dead animals in the forest.

The natural source of Ebola remains unknown, he said, but most of the outbreaks occur during a dry season in the "Ebola pocket," an African area that includes parts of Gabon and the Republic of Congo. A report on the study appears this week in the journal Science.

Karesh said Ebola has decimated what were once large populations of gorilla, chimp and duiker in the area.

"There is a whole region in Gabon where there's very few signs of gorillas and Ebo; there's a place in the Congo where all the gorillas died," said Karesh, a doctor of veterinary medicine. "It looks like more than half of the lowland gorillas in west central Africa have been lost through a combination of hunting and Ebola.

He said some have estimated that more than 10,000 apes have been killed in recent years by Ebola.

Dr. Gary Simon, an expert on Ebola at the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the study by Karesh and his colleagues is an important contribution to the continuing effort to understand and control Ebola.

"We suspected that the apes were involved in spreading Ebola to humans, but not the scientific," said Simon. "The fact that the antelope could be an intermediate host is something that we hadn't appreciated previously."

Karesh said hunting and the sale of game, a trade called "bush meat," is common in the Ebola area of Africa, and experts are worried that selling the meat of infected animals could lead to widespread disease among humans. The issues factor presenting this, Karesh said, is the isolation of the Ebola pocket.

"There is a tremendous potential of [diseased meat] getting into the market, but so far most people really like infected meat get sick before they can do, relatively," he said. AP

ASTRONAUT Eugene Cernan walks toward the... 1972. The photograph was taken by astronaut H... moonwalker leaving evidence in the Apollo prog...

Bush sets US' ...

WASHINGTON—US President George W. Bush announced plans on Wednesday to send humans back to the moon in early to 2018 and eventually to Mars—in what even your minister that critics derided as a costly extravagance that could restore a military space race.

"We will build new ships to carry astronauts into the universe, to gain a new foothold on the moon and prepare for new journeys to the worlds beyond our own," Bush said at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The announcement came less than a year after the breakup of the space shuttle Columbia, which killed all seven astronauts on February. Bush said the remaining space shuttles would be retired in 2010.

The new initiative would be "a journey not a race," said Bush, calling on other nations to join the US effort.

It could also help extend US military supremacy in space at a time when China is planning lunar exploration missions.

"You always want the technology high ground," Republican Sen. Jim Bunning of Kansas, chair of the Senate commerce subcommittee on science, technology and space, said.

Each climbing echoed a key aim of the 1960s US space race against the Soviet Union.

After dinner, head of the environmental advocacy group Global Resource Action Center for the Environment, warned the Bush initiative "will create a new strain on the heavens."

US outside officials have said millions

US 'negligence' killed newsmen in Iraq–RSF

LONDON—The killing of two journalists in a Baghdad hotel by a US shell was the result of "criminal negligence" for which President George W. Bush's government is partly responsible, a leading media watchdog said Thursday.

Reuters cameraman Taras Protsyuk and a Spanish television colleague, Jose Couso, were killed by the shell which was fired by a US tank at the Palestine Hotel in the Iraqi capital on April 8, in the final stages of the US-led war to topple Saddam Hussein.

The Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) watchdog said in a special report that the firing of the shell was not a deliberate attack on the media but US soldiers should have been told by their commanders that a large number of journalists was based in the hotel.

"The shooting at this building was therefore not deliberately aimed at journalists or the press in Baghdad, as sometimes people have claimed. It was, however, an act of criminal negligence for which responsibility should clearly be established," the watchdog said in a covering statement with the report.

The report called for a reopening of a US army inquiry which found that sergeant Shawn Antoine Gibson acted "in an appropriate manner" when they fired into the hotel.

The report criticized US authorities for maintaining ahead of the inquiry that the source for the firing of the shell was legitimate self-defense in response to shootings from the hotel.

"The first version of events became the official version and was cited by the authorities," AFP said.

The report said the key to the tragedy was that soldiers in the field were never told that a large number of journalists were in the Palestine Hotel nor was a marked on maps used by artillery support soldiers.

"If they had known, they would never have fired," AFP said. Reuters

ights on moon, Mars

EAST ASIA MEETS LATIN AMERICA AT ARANETA

FORUM FOR EAST ASIA-LATIN AMERICA COOPERATION · MANILA PHILIPPINES · 2004

FORUM FOR EAST ASIA-LATIN AMERICA COOPERATION

- **OPENING CEREMONIES**
  January 17, 2004
  9:30 AM / Ali Mall
- **COUNTRY EXHIBIT**
  January 17 to 18, 2004
  10 AM to 8 PM / Ali Mall
- **PARADE OF NATIONS**
  January 17, 2004
  9:30 AM / Araneta Center

ali mall • farmers market • farmers plaza • value station
araneta coliseum • coliseum circle • fiesta food strip

WOW PHILIPPINES

Araneta Center

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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Lust for blood

EDITORIAL

NOW that another co-accused of Rodolfo Lazo has dictated the death row convict who's scheduled for execution on Jan. 30, there is greater reason for President Macapagal-Arroyo to stay the execution and reconsider her decision to lift the moratorium on capital punishment. If she does not heed reason, she must at least heed life. There is always wisdom in erring on the side of life.

At least two persons who had confessed to the 1990 kidnapping of Joseph Tatlan Jr. have gone on record to say that Lazo had nothing to do with the crime. Lazo, a construction worker, and his companion, Roderick Licayan, were convicted of the abduction in 1999, which was affirmed by the Supreme Court two years later. But public attorneys have called for a stay of execution inasmuch as the other accused have remained at large. Two of them, Rodolfo Los Reyes and Pedro Mabasang, were captured recently and they have since claimed Licayan and Lazo. Public attorney Persida Rueda-Acosta has been pleading with Malacañang to defer the executions so as to give the convictions time to present new evidence. "We're talking of human lives here, and we can't bring back the dead in case they turn out to be innocent."

The possibility of a miscarriage of justice should be enough to stop the executions. The possibility is strong and distinct because our justice system is porous and prone to error.

Even in countries with strong justice systems, capital punishment has not been applied since June 2004, seeing as of several convicts in Europe who had been exonerated during the decades when capital punishment was observed (14 has since been abolished in the continent) showed they could not have committed the crimes for which they were hanged.

In England, a country believed to have a foolproof justice system, the 1848 hanging last year of a convict put to death a few years back in a celebrated rape case affirmed what the convict had been telling all along: he was innocent. In the case of the infamous case of the "Guildford Four," Irish nationals who were convicted in England of a terrorist bombing at London in the 1970s, it was found that the police had fabricated evidence against them in the face of public pressure. The discovery compelled the high court to release the convicts after 15 years, but not after one of them had languished and died in prison. The case is dramatized in the 1993 movie by Irish director Jim Sheridan, "In the Name of the Father," starring Daniel Day Lewis.

The last case is particularly relevant to us in the Philippines. The President has lifted the moratorium on executions because of strong pressure to show results in the government's campaign against kidnap-for-ransom, particularly during an election season. In fact, the law resurrecting the death penalty after capital punishment was abolished by the 1987 Constitution, came about because of a perceived nonexistent crime wave. All of this means that the state is reviving the death penalty in order to pander to the galleries, in order to score points and win votes, like a Roman emperor satisfying the mob's cry for the death of a fallen gladiator. In short, the executions are being carried out to satisfy blood lust.

Such lust is irrational and goes along with the sheer irrationality of the arguments for capital punishment. Proponents say the death penalty is a deterrent even if studies, including those of the Nobel Prize-winning economist Gary Becker's, show that it is efficiency of law enforcement and justice administration, and not the magnitude of punishment, that deters crimes. Interestingly the administration has been trumpeting a kidnap-free Christmas season after scoring big against kidnap-for-ransom gangs, with the killing of one and the capture of three of the 10 most wanted kidnap-for-ransom leaders.

Proponents say the eye-for-an-eye, tooth-for-a-tooth rule is just and biblical when they forget that that scriptural injunction belongs to the Old Testament and not to the New Testament that upholds mercy. In fact, Pope John Paul II and the Roman Catholic Church have said that the death penalty is a cruel and inhumane punishment that, because of penal progress and modern civilization, has become anathema to Christianity.

If President Macapagal, who styles herself as a devout Catholic, insists on carrying out the executions, she will be like the Roman emperor who not only thumbed down fallen gladiators and sent them to their deaths, but also fed the Christians to the lions. She will do this to satisfy the blood lust of the mob and win the vote. But the blood will be on her hands.

SSS chief explains P8-billion deal

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

CHAIR Corazon dela Paz of the Social Security System requested that she be allowed to explain the controversial sale of SSS-owned shares in Bankside-PCIBank, which was then requested latest a week ago. So I listened as her properties.

What is it all about? Four years ago, the SSS bought 187.8 million shares of Bankside-PCIB at P76 per share for a total of P14.3 billion. During the Christmas holidays, the SSS sold those shares to Metrobank for only P43,100 a share. Total proceeds: P8.1billion.

If you bought at P76 and sold at P43.10 per share, isn't that a 40-percent loss? And P8 billion is a monumental loss any way you look at it, Ma'am?

It would seem that at any basis you need not ask me, said Sis la Paz. And so she explained why an P8 billion loss in price is actually "the best deal" the SSS has received since. It is an economic sleight-of-hand, but I will explain it in an understandable way (she's smart).

For four years now, the SSS P14.3 billion investment in PCI has not been earning any thing since 2000. PCI has not declared any dividends. The SSS therefore could not invest those funds in other stocks. Last December, EDP was down to P81.50 per share. The SSS' 187.8 million shares have already lost more than half of their value. Nevertheless, in current dollar shares are in bonds, so in original price, so paper the SSS has got lost anything.

Should the SSS hold on to those shares, hoping the price would go up? Or should it sell it now before the price drops further? The first alternative is risky because the Philippine economy is depressed not only here but all over the world. Waiting for the price to rise would be a very long time, which would mean more losses for the SSS because its asset is non-performing. Moreover, it has been reported that top-ranking officials of government have received some shares could not invest.

The second alternative is the sensible one

With this, the SSS will be able to diversify its investment portfolio. The EPG shares is appropriately 10 percent of SSS' total investment funds, a large exposure that would benefit from current diversified portfolio.

Now why the shares?

Hmm-ahh, replied the SSS president, if such a transaction leaked out, the stock markets would react. EPG share prices would go up. Speculators who had previous knowledge of the deal could buy EPG shares cheap and then sell them when prices rose. That would be unfair and is illegal. The EPG price has already jumped in the stock market (it was P45 per share yesterday) and that was because of news even to SSS-EPG deal.

SSS funds are trust funds that should be invested carefully to bring the best returns. Why did it, never is such speculative sources such as the Bankside-PCI Bank?

The EPG shares were bought by the government when they were acquired (Meh Pee, But what could it do if the President had ordered it? In other words, the SPC2 purchase was a "bitter purchase." That is what the previous SSS administration is trying to correct.

It was also why the SSS subsidies for Pnb billion over the value of its investment?

She said the doesn't have the exact figures, but that should include the investments in housing to government agencies participated in the National Housing Authority. Housing projects are not profitable short terms, and so the government agencies cannot pay the SSS back.

* * *

KAPALAN NOTES: Guests at next Monday's **Kapalan on Manila** are Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos who will explain the 4-hr. manual counters for the automated counting machines and what the prospects are for holding the May polls on time.

Also on hand will be two voices with old names in the political scene: Amelo Rudriguez, unsuccessful candidate of the KMP and Pio Carcamo, acquitted candidate of 6-4.

No, you don't (Part 2)

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

ONE of the most amazing experiences I had while discussing the Garmon elections is enquiry of votes are less watching the votes being tallied on TV. The quilting books closed at 8 p.m. during the election day, and by 8 p.m. all persons who were on hand to monitor the results were complaining that the counting was taking so unduly long time. This was so because the team counters, Gutbuch Schnauzer and Eduardo Schnauzer, were running neck and neck. Does this signify, however, other than intended? A sigh of relief when it became clear that Schnauzer would remain in power, courtesy of the strong showing of his wife, the Green Party liberals after midnight. Incident conceded defeat.

This was supposed to be a second debut/

I'd always called on, I had also asked to be put who can count as in the instances of Garmon elections about the prospects of a candidate's chances. In truth, the question has sometimes found a role to emerge and merely to support hostile idea.

I too now find myself in the ironic position of lauding the suppression of the Comelec's automated counting and canvassing. I've been arguing for the computerization of the election process for some time now, figuring that it is not just the fastest way of doing things but the safest one. Data analysis for the overseas vote.

I became a computer convert after watching Boston Celtics' Larry Bird and Magic Johnson in their heyday. Bird was a computer. Johnson was a computer. Bird was a computer. Johnson was a computer. Bird was a computer. Johnson was a computer

Presidential Forum: fantasy or reality

COMMENTARY

Asuncion David Marcoshe

Time: Primetime, of course.

Length: Three hours perhaps, but no enough for friends impose history trials for whole afternoons, did we not?) The idea of a marathon is intriguing and underscores the importance of the program, not to mention the endurance and stamina of the candidates.

The candidates: Only the principal presidential contenders will be considered, and to do this there be personality presents. No substitutes allowed.

The 12 mens related problems as to content. In fact is possible, the problems must be couched in as many one-on-one limit and issue could be given the justice, poverty mortality corruption etc., which are likely to invite nothing but motherhood statements. Some suggestions, if in particular of the are: housing, population, the military the police, environment, agriculture and the New People's Army and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, schools and teachers, job generation, the flood deficit, the minimum exemption of public servants (the pork barrel), to be very specific—earnest that and not the candidates' luck issues, product liens etc). Judges can limit indirection (superlatives, infrastructure, health services, agriculture and fisheries, crime and punishment, etc.

The composition of the panel of interrogators: all politicians and representatives of politically-oriented organizations are excluded. Each issue be drawn for expertise and integrity. Two per problem or more may be enough to make a body of 24.

The questions: They must be as specific as possible, involving statistics if necessary, to limit "safe" and "blanket" answers impossible. Of course, the questions must be intelligent, practical, and timely, forsd and to the point. It goes without saying that no question must be loaded in favor of a presidential candidate. Every panelist may be allowed two questions each and one follow-up question. For every four or five questions, one phase in may be eliminated, depending on the time arrangements.

The answers: Each answer must be less but not more than a specified number of minutes. Could done by a signal or indicator (has "timer's up"). If the candidate consumes his time or finishes before, that's his problem. Both questions and answers must be delivered in Filipino or English.

The rating: The judges, who must be as carefully selected as the panel, must formulate their criteria. One clip like "If you use the ito..." or "I wish to answer the economy" or "Republican also..." should score a hefty "minus" reduction in rating.

The audience: This is where will establish the passing and, to a considerable extent, the mood of the house. Not only must be speak well, he must be fair, very smart, even composed and "wise," like Randy David or Antonio Abaya. Whatever happens, the audience must be made to believe that all a moderate needs is amazing small talk!

The organizers: "Time and money" and everything else will have to pill and be fine-tuned. And there's the delicious choice of the venue one. This enterprise will need big books, big hearts and organizational skills.

If what I have written seems somewhat crude and naive, remember that this is fantasy and anything goes. It's a long shot, but somebody out there might make my fantasy come true.

Asuncion David Marcoshe is a retired professor, bank officer and occasional journalist. Comments to marcoshe@ads.com.ph, fax 8519618.

Creative madness

72:00 is an election year, so it should come as no surprise that the operational madness of our times that's for the media have a field longer. Some say the purpose of the firecrackers and the musicians in the casino is to drive out the evil spirits. That is going on, but that we have to admit people are deliberately include events.

In the streets of Project 4 on New Year's Eve, I watched my usually quiet, reserved neighbors turn into loud-throwing animals. During the election campaign ordinary people are also changed: they are more alert, more interested in the country's future and more aware of their power as citizens. It is a time with great potential for the country's good.

COMMENTARY

Dennis Murphy

I offer two examples of this change, my mother-in-law and an urban poor man I have come to know quite well.

My mother-in-law usually pays no attention to the news, but during the election she is following the issues closely and is very much aware of the changes. She now insists that we watch a few shows ago and she told me with, "Young lives ang napakilos ni pangulo si Erap ng 2001."

Among them, Manny?" my wife asked, wondering perhaps about her mother's mental being.

"Hindi kasama, kasi batang-bata pa."

Most of the young people in the street can't be a new or even on the front research group's goal.

During the election campaign people like my mother-in-law who usually skip news programs become involved, and will have more to listen if they have an insight into the tactic.

Ordinary people sense that their power for a reason, without power it would not be a meaning. "Pa gitna ng eh. Hindi. Pumunta, pumunta, ito nanlang kapitan."

He may have a legitimate gripe or not, but either way it speaks well of democracy here and the heightened appreciation of it that comes as election time that a poor man feels he can judge the President and is speaking his mind—thinking of someone else to do the job. Millions of people are interested in the campaign who won't cast their national votes for another six years and the next presidential election.

Media and the churches have special responsibilities.

Media, of course, like candidates, have the difficult task of using ordinary people terms what is being said and done and keeping them abreast of it. People can understand complicated issues if they are explained clearly, and they are eager to learn. The following suggestions for media were gathered from friends in many ways.

Media should clarify the use of words. Take, for example, the issues of reconciliation. What it being reconciled and about what? Sociological studies show that severe divides exist between rich and poor (The interests of Philippine Colleges study on urban poor areas, "Bridging the Social Divide," for example), and that reconciliation between labor and management, tribal people and mining companies, has these divides are not being reconciled. These classic divisions that go to the issues of society are not even discussed. Rather, reconciliation seems to mean that politicians and their leaders some on pragmatic arrangements on the division of wealth and power in the country that is causing the problems.

Media should explain this. They should make clear the limitations of the politician's "reconciliation." They should urge politicians to discuss the main basic divisions and the choices of reconciliation there.

Media should use the agenda of the campaign by asking candidates to spell out in some detail what foreign policy decisions they will take, and what they will do about the land reform, mining rights, forest conservation, urban missions and urban development, the Constitution, new forms of governance, and so on. Soon, the World Trade Organization said for example, jobs in the economy, especially for unskilled workers and many other issues that affect people's lives.

The churches also have responsibilities, but it is less clear what they can do. Studies made on the issues of Philippine Culture in the Commonwealth area of Quezon City since the 1930's show that the churches have been very popular prior to the efforts of the church and others to get their votes' education sessions. Why are we singled out? the poor ask.

The workers also revealed that only a small percentage—around 5 percent or so—attended taking money for their votes.

Also a talking of the qualities of ideal candidates, as the Catholic Church does, is not very useful. Archbishop Oscar Cruz addressed recently he said it was clear, no present candidate comes close to showing the Church's ideal to.

Archbishop Cardenas is flexible and other bishops say they will not endorse candidates. But the voice of churches did produce a candidate, it is doubtful if it would really help. Jaime Cardinal Sin supported candidates who lost badly for president Ruffino Cardinal Santos was famous for backing losers; the backing of a candidate seemed to guarantee the election of the opponent.

What voters want the churches do? They still have to decide this, but one possibility which is in line with being the Church of the Poor, is close the bishops, priests and other leaders find out what reforms the poor people want and give voice to those reforms. Can the Church help make the agenda of the campaign more democratic?

Elections are a special time with great potential for helping people understand the problems that have the country and politics entrenched. If the media and the church disciples that role, the limitless that democratic campaign and be creative and modern by involving everyone—not especially the poor, get the country moving in the right road in prosperity and peace.

Then we will be able to say with the Irish people of 1916 and 1918, Wow, "Everything is changed, changed terribly A new tide tyranny is born."

Denis Murphy works with the Urban Poor Associates.

Haven for children and women

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

17 000 elevator shoes was a gathering of "hip-hop" artists in Alabang Town Center yesterday judging from the make and number of sneakers pulled along both sides of the shabang Lapen road. But the primary attraction was announcing the game of the Haven for Children and the travels for Women (Phase 2) formed the other side activities atmosphere.

The occasion was the inauguration and blessing of the two-storey phase of the Haven for Women is a project begun in 1999 and operated since by the Congressional Spouses Foundation, Inc. Its "successful" but the project here that it has since expanded to different regions in the country and now responded an action to house not just battered women but also their temporary shelter, livelihood training and healing.

Yesterday, the CSFI marked the expansion of their area of concern, inaugurating a Center for Children for the rehabilitation of street children recovering from drug addiction and dependence on other child abuse.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, dressed simply in a salmon pink blouse and dark slacks, explained the approaches the CSFI'S, under Secretary Dinky Soliman, has taken in dealing with the problems of women and children.

"Mama" Gina de Venecia, wife of Speaker Jose de Venecia and chair of the CSFI, sets all smiles at the end of the ceremony doubtless having lettered all her doubts and anxieties about bringing agricultural fair for the women, and locating them on support up the Speaker through the Congress to campaign before her own projects for women and children.

I toured one of the restored yellow buildings with the Boo's Jo Anne Rae Ramirez, and we were quite impressed with the clean, airy and cheery interiors. Schoolchildren, hopes and crew beginnings are born in the two remaining apartments.

* * *

SO CONFIDENT with the "tourist" my fellow jaunts said I can remember during my judging at "Pinakamagaling Pinoy Blood Donor" sponsored by **Philippine Blood Alliance Foundation**, one project that really impressed me was called "A Gen-

erous Gift."

Sonny Angara Living Blood Bank System, "The Education Research Program of the UP Center for Integrative and Developmental Studies was the proponent, but the project will be carried out in Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija.

When we dropped by their booth, we were pleasantly surprised to find the town mayor, Lucas R. Macabio, as well as Governor Aurora Nuesa on hand to help with the interviews, together with representatives of UP CIDS and Lions officials, installing the municipal health offices. If that isn't proof of the strong support of the local government, and the people, then I don't know what is.

So the local officials told it, so many of their constituents had died after receiving assistance or falling ill and being brought to hospitals, but they were either too poor to buy blood from commercial providers or they could not find enough donors with the matching blood type. Sourcing blood is a serious problem for communities isolated from resource areas, apparently, and this is why the local officials are capable of organizing a "living blood bank system."

To be implemented on a municipality-wide scale, the project calls for the blood-typing and blood-sourcing of all residents, organizing blood donor drives, and setting up collection and processing centers on health and other matters.

Dr. Eddie Guerrero, himself a former mayor, was most impressed with the community organization scheme, saying that once the people have been educated on the importance of having blood bank for found it difficult to convince it.

Though Cabanatuan's living blood bank was not one of the winners, it's our hope that the local officials and their partners find other sources for funding the project and push through with what is truly an exciting program with huge potential for replication in other similarly situated towns.

When we asked Mayor Macabio what assistance he could give for the continuity of the project in the event it wins, we forgot that he loves to play, he said he made sure the project was "protected" by the province's governor via the provincial council and that it obtained broad support from the community that can't lose political cost with the welfare of his people in mind!

* * *

ANOTHER project worth noting (and funding) is the Butler Hospital Medical Program. It seeks to provide (initially) 50 pediatric cancer patients with initial chemotherapy education either at their bedside or in a hospital-based classroom while undergoing treatment for their illness.

When I asked executive director Sheila Ibarra why the committee chose this project as a "development program," she said they do it to help relieve "this societal issue in the right of every child, even one with cancer," and that multidisciplinary treatment should not bar children with cancer from getting the kind of education they deserve.

The P670,000 the foundation was requesting would go to the hiring of two full-time teachers from the National Orthopedic Hospital School for Crippled Children who will be assigned to two newly-established hospitals—the Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Hospital and the National Children's Hospital. At the same time, they have established a partnership with Bella Bianca whose members will pay the P500 miscellaneous fee for each child patient.

If there had been a contest for "best hands," I would have voted for Butler, which broke out of the three walls of the standard booth and showed kids (mostly children (obviously undergoing chemotherapy) flying kites and crossing a bridge, supported by posts representing the positive experiences in the lives of children with cancer. Indeed, the booth is proof that with a little imagination and a few bucks to provide seriously ill children with a "bridge" to knowledge and a brighter future.

Gordon's latest folly

LOOKING BACK

Antonio R. Gonzalez

PEOPLE are still talking about the Department of Tourism's Lights and Sound project in connection that were way over its initial P78 million budget to P128 million. (In some newspaper reports P170 million). It has a clearer pack atmosphere, and go-ing through the expensive shoots would prompt of the "horror house" in carnival. This one is a horror house both literally and figuratively, is easy to entertaining for children, and that should be to reward, enough that it is supposed to be an overview of Philippine history and an inspiring show on dear Rizal, and this is where it fails. Miserably.

The public is here given Richard Gordon's sanitized (some would say warped) version of Philippine history George Garcia, a History and Government expert at the Ateneo, claimed the script for the show was made, or at least reviewed, by the Ateneo History Department and O.D. Corpus. To that, the Ateneo History Department deserves to resign entirely having anything to do with Light and Sound Show, and we have yet to hear from Dr. Corpus. Since a number of negative reviews have appeared on this already, we will leave that for the moment. If only to prove we Gordon's name today a 30-foot Lapu-Lapu monument in Rizal Park!

Lapu-Lapu is the hero who killed Ferdinand Magellan and an affair from Sarmiento to erect a monument to Lapu-lapu. To chose this Agrifina Circle however the Mandaue/Mactan and BOI Building as the site, has resulted then an unfounded Binondo-Intramuros movement now in the way Under Democratic Decree 1901, it is unlawful for any person to modify, alter, repair or destroy the original features of any national shrine, monument or landmark, then by simple permission from the Office of the President and the National Historical Institute. Gordon has not met the Mandaue Mactan and make way for Lapu-lapu. He was informed that there was not a landmark but the Rizal Park, specifically the area bounded by Taft Avenue, Burgos Drive, T.M. Kalaw Street and Roxas Boulevard, was declared a historical site by the NHI in 1966 to honor the numerous martyrs executed in that area during the Spanish regime.

On Jan. 3, 2003, Gordon was told that he could not erect the Lapu-lapu monument in Rizal Park. The NHI was not against Lapu-lapu as a hero, as a matter of fact is commended Gordon for his efforts to have the Light and Sound Show of the numerous elsewhere. But then Gordon, in the fiance of NHI's efforts and Section 3 of PD 1616, augmented the limited restriction of the Lapu-lapu monument in Rizal Park.

The short presidential term of Ms. Arroyo cannot happen so far. Rizal monument on Dec. 30, 1896, and the three priests, remembered collectively as Gomburza, who were executed on Feb. 17, 1872. From the 1940s Bagumbayan was the "killing field," an execution ground for martyrs, many of whom were Filipinos. Lapu-lapu is among the Filipinos of history, but will it strike big Rizal Park (Bagumbayan) as a fictional historical figure like the following victims:

Fifty-seven supposed Bataguenos captured after the Battle of Mactan: Sumi del Mayo, Pangalimanan) who were executed on Aug. 31, 1899. This was followed by the execution on Sept. 4, 1899 of the Spanish leaders Emilio Aldecoa, Eugenia Elevazo (Mariano Ramirez and Ramon Rueda, a few days after Rizal was executed on September 30. Gabriel Flores, Fr. Severino Diaz, Fr. Inocencio Severo, Manuel Mirafe, Domingo Abella, Camilo Acosta, Macario Hernick, Daniello Mendiola, Mariano Melgarejo, Tomas Perez and Florencio Lerma (of Quiapo). Some in this group did not even make it to Bagumbayan, having died in fist beatings, presumably from torture and maltreatment. These were Ramon Abella, Mariano Ibaña, Leon Hernandez and Mariano Ordoñana.

On Jan. 11, 1897, 11 were executed in Bagumbayan: Hermenio Adriano, Jeremias Crisostomo, Jose M. Dizon, Domingo Franco, Benito Mafiong, Bonifacio Monje, Ramon Padilla, Benito Rivera, Francisco L. Roxas, Faustino Villanueva, Ignacio L. Salvador, Leon Timbol and Antonio Salazar (by feb. 6, 1897, 10 more were killed: Roman Basa (Cavite), Mariano Medina, Teodoro Plata, Apolonio de la Cruz, Hermogildo de los Reyes, Jose Trinidad, Pedro Dizon, Ignacio Paua, Ambrosio del Rosario and Mariano Quintos.

While Gordon claims to honor Rizal in the form, name Light and Sound Show (which, by the way, ends with a self-serving monologue written and read by Gordon himself), he insists on erecting a monument to Lapu-lapu on the supposed site of Rizal and numerous 100-century martyrs. Perhaps Gordon has forgotten that Rizal is actually buried under the Rizal monument! Manila, as the center of Philippines for that matter, has a lot of empty spaces where to put the Lapu-lapu monument, so why persist in the illegal construction of the monument on a declared historical site?

The best publicity claims to honor Rizal with one hand but dishonors him with the other. On this note, Gordon has shown his true colors. Now that he is ordered to clear the location, it would be well for voters to remember this illegal Lapu-lapu project and judge the man by his acts rather than his words. Gordon is a glib talker, a good salesman, but because of his deceptive ways, he has lost the trust of many people in government should at the very least respect the law and not be law-breakers.

* * *

Comments are welcome at wasango@yahoo.com.

THEY SAID

Proxy president

"Clearly, if Executive Pur 181 becomes president, Sen. Edgardo Angara could be the outrageous president of the century."

—former Sen. Heherson Alvarez

Contradiction

"The evolution of our democracy may be slow, but if we want to change it, we must start with ourselves. It is a contradiction to be joining an election as a progressive and yet go—hange group while at the same time endorsing trapos."

—Akbayan Citizens Action Party-list, saying the incorporation of the National Democratic Front's 'united to struggle' bloc in coalition

The INQUIRER is a member of the PHILIPPINE PRESS INSTITUTE

Tell that to the Marines

LETTING PREE Philippines? Tell that to the Marines, not the people of Ilaro.

In this town, tanong operations, such a regular verb during the Fidemik season, does what the Philippine National Police should've done when has been impossible to stop half a century ago: it

over a century than 50 percent of the country is nursing there. But in the start of the new term, a "possible-case" ticking operation is summit unopposed. Local officials did not even lift a finger to run after the corruptions of the illegal numbers game.

All these pronouncements of

Adequate education is needed

HEIGHTO For Jr. is reported to be extending academic credit courses to bring gains by University of the Philippines, ateneo and other previous set. This is one help but rather up for his inadequate group of major wages that's in the system. But how matters about the time is before election this is basic. Many of us get a college education after or more hour years, only to settle for clerical or menial jobs. How comes PEJ hoping to get the training needed for the most difficult job necessary to counters of security.

There are many people now quick to justify IPJ's gaining high school. It is difficult to understand who that is. Is the death of one parent a valid reason to quit high school? The entire citizenship say children to be interested in schooling. If PEJ can do it, why can't they?

They must be helped to understand that PEJ has an experienced talent and charisma to feel show his loyalty only for show but. This is the reason why he has been very successful in show his. But

leading a country is not show biz, as there is to the opposite. Being merely kind-hearted is not all that is needed by a strong leader. In fact, it can be dangerous, certainly a would be to prioritize against those hungry people in politics.

IPJ will become president. God forbid, but it is likely because the dumb country he joins is. Then who claims is not important at all.

I hope I unsuccessfully wrong.

—RAMON S. VILLARIN,
San Ignacio Village,
Intramuros, Cebu City

LETTERS

Entitled to sewer tank drainage

MEnnot be aware that residential, commercial establishments, theaters and others being serviced by Maynilad and Manila Water are entitled to free drainage of our sewerage tank or pum septic, because we get billed a monthly sewerage and sewerage fee. This was true even during the time of Pilotista but this was never made clear to the consumers.

We can request this service directly from the water company serving one's residential area or through the barangay chief in the locality.

—RICARDO VILLAMOR,
Mandaluyong City

Robot's escape route

If it is necessary to the postoperation of our Army doctors that they are doing everything they can to keep an enemy of the state, Commander Bobos, alive.

Remember, the doctors have to be very cautious, for Bobos is no ordinary man. If one leg has to be amputated, then it is probably necessary in order to save his life. If the other leg also needs to be

GMA ads on tollways, etc.

ADVERTISEMENT it was allowed in the tollways due to an existing law. Republic Act 3006, that prohibits advertisements on government property. Curiously, Skyle Television subsidiary of Manny Pangilinan's Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, Inc. (PLDT), which operates the Skyway, Tollways, Limpopo with President Macapagal-Arroyo's private secretary Ma. Isabel Ongpin, is also responsible for the billboards.

Some GMA guys are probably making money through revenues derived from advertisements (approximately P1.5 million per month) and the government is not earning anything. If so, it looks like they are using the ads as a campaign tool for GMA because approximately three out of four commuters are homeboards.

Government property should not be used for political gain. If these are profits derived from the ad placements, who do they keep receiving tollway fees?

—ELIAS ESTRES,
Bakgatan@yahoo.co

Dream, struggle, pray

ELECTIONS in our country are events in ourselves, even in moments of crisis. Politicians have another and women leaders of helping the poor use any coherent ideology that would change the status quo.

Dependent both on the resources of moneyed interest groups and on the votes of the poor, they cannot then afford to include truly transforming social content in their political/economic platforms. Thus, the traditional "patronage politics" has to be maintained by semi-buying, threats or actual violence. People at large seem to cope more for projects and gifts and less for substantive issues on which candidates should take a stand to guide voters accordingly.

Politics in the Philippine context has come to mean partisan politics where political convictions and sentiments are geared not even for the good of the party per se, but for particular persons and/or vested groups. There is a need to reassess politics in its original meaning and purpose, i.e. as an act of public service for the common good, or the noble mission to evangelize politics, so that we can make Philippine politics what it is meant to be—a tool for the total and integral human development for every Filipino.

To hasten the day we have to dream, struggle and pray, especially since Christianity originally a religion of change, is now perceived as a religion of the status quo.

—FR. BIENVENIDO CUEVAS, SVD,
vice Rector, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation,
SVD-ICI, Admiralty St., Cebu City

Not fascism but Stalinism

THE TERMINAL people within the Communist Party of the Philippines should not have been called fascists but rather Stalinists. Stalin killed almost all the original Bolsheviks in the 1930s, often after extracting false confessions of disloyalty to means of torture.

Jose Marie Sison, a.k.a. Amado Guerrero, a.k.a. Armando Liwanag, is an avowed admirer of Stalin, set up a similar barracks, and killed off to the middle-class leaders and although avowed democracy in the CPP is said to exist on paper, in reality there is an absolute dictator.

Sison had already ordered assassinations of dissident activists who contested his leadership in the fault as 1966 when he was head of the Kabataang Makabayan (KM). His leadership, almost within the PKP led to a split, and the formation of the rival organization Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan (SDK), which difficult politically rally is not being controlled by Sison. Leading up to the ELEAIK split, Sison arranged a talk using false warrants with the IOC.

When these were underground and formed the CPP on Dec. 26, 1968, it was mainly the reasons of making it his center and having complete control of the organizations, and to get away from the area he made in the ELF.

The killings of possible over orthodoxy dedicated and heroic activists within the CPP/NPA in the years since the overthrow of Marcos could not have occurred without the approval of Sison, and he bears the ultimate responsibility.

Wayne Hirst of our current political president, we should all recognize that these murdered activists were steadfast idealists, motivated by a strong desire for social justice, and by love for the Filipino people.

—MICHEL SILAGA,
silaga.bong@yahoo.com

A breath of fresh air

STEVE ALL the national and socioeconomic ills the world of politics and the people of the Philippine people, the columns of Leonardo de Quiroz are a breath of fresh air and hope to the country. If ever seniors should be given the award for literary independence and willingness "sacrifice it is," he Quiroz is the man.

We are Filipino-Americans, however, our love for our country has never waned nor will never diminish. We are so proud that someone like De Quiroz keeps a much holes and proofs to the truth, notwithstanding the powerful people who could be affected.

From our reading of his columns, he now live in a very modest place, in downtown Intramuros apartment building, and this our subject matter. We pray to the Lord that this man keeps safe to continue his unwavering mission to educate the consciences of our leaders and improve the country as a whole. True, "conscience" is quite an important subject for De Quiroz as he has written a classic on this subject.

—CONCERNED FILIPINO,
jclaar@hotmail.com

Across the NATION

Move to cancel all log permits in ARMM emerges

COTABATO CITY—The law-making body of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) wants the national executive, through legislation, of all timber license agreements (TLAs) that the government has issued to giant logging firms operating within its territorial jurisdiction.

Regional Legislative Assembly Bill No. 91, the proposed ARMM Sustainable Forest Management Law, seeks to void all existing and valid timber licenses, contracts or agreements granted (for logging operations) by (some of) ARMM to the national or regional government for the development, management and conservation of forest resources...."

Assemblyman Sukarno Abdulmalong, the author, said aside from making TLAs the bill also seeks to reconcile and integrate environmental and forestal concepts of forest management into one piece of legislation.

The bill, which is being pushed to serve as the ARMM Forestry Code, also provides "employment and gainful services as well as livelihood opportunities and enhancement of the environmental sustainability" in the region.

"It is a product of a series of consultations and roundtable discussions, and is jointly based on the basic principles of ecology and the principles of modern governance of the devolved natural resources," Abdulmalong said.

Some of the terms introduced in the bill are "definable" (unexceptional) and "reasonable" (smart), which are absent under the existing law.

Abdulmalong also made perceptive observations in law, "because the ending to forestry is also environmentalism, being the core of democracy is the product of the anglo-Saxon experiences, which was a good ingredient of the Roman and the Shariah Law combined."

He said Shariah "should not always be perceived as a purely spiritual law."

"It is also very much present in our secular way of life be it in civil, criminal, administrative, commercial or banking laws. It's only a matter of interpreting and expounding on the applicability of laws," Abdulmalong said. Wahi B. Mandilan, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Army asks hospitals to report wounded rebs

CAGAYAN CITY—The top official of a Philippine Army brigade based in Cagayan province has appealed to medical practitioners and hospitals in the region and the nearby island province of Siquijor to inform government authorities as soon as [illegible] from battle wounds in the past few days.

Brig. Gen. Edilberto Adan, chief of the 402nd Infantry Brigade based in Bukidnon, Lanao, said the wounded guerrillas could be members of New People's Army (NPA) rebels ranked as Ad Hoc detachment members or the Special Forces Legal power platoon Cabalo, Bisangol bat Barandas.

Others said reliable sites around wounded armed were followed in by NPA members. Marlon Ramos, PDI Bureau Lauren Ramos

Hussin to stay as ARMM gov despite Senate bid

COTABATO CITY—Gov. Parouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao on Monday said he would maintain unity in the region's chief executive even if the campaign period were in mind.

Hussin rests as ARMM governor [illegible] in November.

Hussin, the lone Muslim candidate in President Macapagal's 6-4 senatorial ticket, said he needs at least 12 million votes and P200 million funds to make it to the Senate.

"I believe I can get that popular in Lanao, Sulu[illegible] and other part of Mindanao as compared to politicians and media and TV personalities," he cited in a news conference.

Speaking during his third term of the region address here, Hussin said President Macapagal-Arroyo has promised him all-out support during the campaign.

Reporting to the townspeople, Hussin said the region improved during his term and hopes to [illegible] here on to share.

He urged the Regional Legislative Assembly to pass legislation that would boost the economy of the five ARMM provinces. Edicar D. Fernandez and Oliver C. Lariosa, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Cops urge Palace OK of probe of drug center head

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—Police officials on Thursday sought the clearance of Malacañang to conduct a pre-charge investigation of a presidential appointee managing a drug rehabilitation center where abuses and corruption had allegedly transpired.

The consent from the Palace would allow the filing of charges for serious neglect of duty against Senator Sagip Gumaba Britos, executive director of the Central Luzon Drug Rehabilitation Center (CLDRC), according to Senior Supt. Raul Manzanillo, chief of the regional police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (CIDU).

Britos dismissed the accusations as a fresh effort to remove him from his post.

Police officials who wanted Britos to take criminal responsibility for the performance of the allegedly punished or cohort inmates and others from the 22-man parabrick at the CLDRC. The policemen were relieved on Thursday.

Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, regional police director, said the relief of the six policemen "significantly the start of a more serious investigation" of the reported irregularities at the CLDRC.

Bodyguard were Senior Insp. Danilo Legada, chief of the CLDRC's rehabilitation management office, and domiciliary staffers PO1 Wilfredo Sioco, PO1 Jonathan Magsalin, PO1 Ephraim Cortado, Reynaldo Fernandez and Rudy Antiporda.

They were reassigned to their police camp.

The six, reached separately by the Inquirer on Wednesday, denied allegations of misconduct.

There will cause on the CLDRC resulted some real and administrative charges on behalf of the prisoners.

On the request of a lawyer, the patients were released on Monday night to the custody of their parents in Bamban, Bataan, Zambales, Pampanga, Cavite and Metro Manila.

In a three-page report on the progress of an investigation begun last Monday, Manzanillo said the six policemen were relieved to "facilitate the possible harassment" of 111 other patients who also claimed to suffer from the "hard labor and brutal treatment punishment" at the center in Magalang, Pampanga.

Legada, according to the report, threatened the 22 patients not to report the punishments they received from trainers over violations such as drinking liquor and smoking on the 24 and 31 last year.

The patients were hit with paddles in the buttocks as punishment, Senator Britos, PRO Central Luzon Prod

Gov's aide faces raps for spying on gov bet

GUIMBAL, ILOILO CITY—The group of [illegible] gubernatorial candidate Ted Domingson will file an administrative complaint against a ranking employee in Iloilo province who allegedly used a government car for partisan political activity.

A source from the Integrated Reconstruction and Information Organization (IRIO), a party organized by the Chiongbian clan, told reporters a car with plate No. "Gov" Unofficial source in Iloilo City last week to take pictures of Domingson's house in Jaro, Iloilo City.

The source, however, said the house belongs to Domingson's father.

The use of government vehicle for political purposes is against Commission on Audit rules.

Grubio, a newly appointed assistant department head of the provincial public information office, is a protégé of incumbent governor Miguel Zavalsa who is seeking his second term.

The security guard of the house managed to get the car's plate number.

The guard tried to overhear Grubio but Grubio sped off in a Crossroad with license plate NOC 200.

Last week, Grubio executed an affidavit admitting he [illegible] the supposed house of Domingson.

The affidavit, photographs and video footage taken by Grubio were used as evidence in [illegible] against Domingson. *Apolito C. Jimeta, PDI Bladimer Barrera*

CHILDREN'S MASS
What could be more fitting than have children take center stage during Mass celebrated in honor of the Child Jesus in Cebu on each 16th and 17th of the Mass, which has become an annual tradition for Cebuanos.

Missing mountaineer's kin offer ₱200,000 reward

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Philippine Inquirer

BOKOD, CITY—The family of a mountaineer who disappeared in Antique province nearly a year ago has offered a cash reward after receiving reports that the mountaineer was seen alive with a group of armed men in Antique and Aklan.

The family of Leonel Dacula Tuba "Leonel" Guinawan said it would give ₱200,000 to anyone who could give information on Leonel's location.

Leaflets and posters with the [illegible] offer and picture of Leonel are being circulated in the region and Iloilo.

Anyone with information of Leonel's location can contact Leonel's mother Rolanda at cell phone number 09218 3232209 or report to the nearest police station or village chief.

Morales said she could not understand why law enforcement agencies could not locate her son until now.

Leonel, of Mandalayang City, disappeared in the Madia-as mountain ranges in Culasi town in Antique, 92 kms north of the capital town of San Jose, on Feb. 17 during a mountain climbing trip with friends. He turned 23 last December.

Leonel disappeared in the southern part of the mountain. 2,000 feet above sea level, on their descent. He has not been found despite a massive search operation joined by hundreds of policemen, volunteers and members of mountain climbing groups all over the country.

Benjamin L. Ilan, executive officer of the Provincial Disaster and Coordinating Council, said they have received reports that Leonel was with armed men in the hinterland villages of Aklan and Antique.

The New People's Army earlier accused the Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) of abducting the mountaineer for ransom but this has been [illegible] denied by the RPA-ABB.

Gov't funds giant cake's Guinness bid

BAGUIO CITY—The Department of Tourism has raised over ₱500,000 to the Benguet provincial government to finance the attempt of representatives of the Guinness Book of World Records to document the entry of the province's giant strawberry cake to Guinness.

Purification Molintas, DOT Cordillera director, said the money would be used to pay for the Guinness representatives' transportation and accommodation and for other expenses in staging the festival.

Molintas said two previous record-breaking festivals—Benguet's king cheese cake and Baguio's giant tinned salad—failed to be acknowledged as official Guinness entries because these were not documented by official Guinness representatives.

"Submitting the documentary requirements to Guinness was not enough. We already learned from our lesson," she said.

The ₱500,000 check was turned over to DOT and Benguet officials on that today by former Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon and acting Tourism Secretary Ivan Bukaneg.

Mayor Bruce Bugnosen of La Trinidad, Benguet, said the organizers of the strawberry festival are determined to break their previous records when the town's premier cake entry is ushered to the public on March 13.

The giant cake fed at least 10,000 people during the first festival in 2002. Last year, at least 24,000 people ate the cake.

"This time, we want to feed 40,000 people," said Bugnosen.

He said the festival aims to promote La Trinidad as the major producer of strawberries in the country.

Jerry Beltran, vice president of the Baguio Association of Hotels and Inns Inc., said the Baguio tourist related festival should receive the same support from the government as its [illegible] ranging have this year.

Beltran said they were surprised to learn that the giant strawberry cake festival will be supported financially by the government, considering that they have received their incoming Baguio-based called festival to the Guinness record books was "impressive" due to the various fees and requirements needed for recognition. *Jaime Cabuso, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Communist rebels burn bus over 'revolutionary taxes'

LUCENA CITY—Communist guerrillas burned a bus plying the Lucena-Manila route in Barangay Concepcion Ibaba, Sariaya town, this province, Wednesday after the bus owner refused to pay revolutionary taxes.

No one was hurt or injured in the incident, but a policeman who was on the bus was hit. All suspects in the rebels.

Two of the guerrillas boarded the JAC Liner bus, owned by Dominador Juico Chua, at the Good Central Terminal here.

On the Maharlika Highway, two more guerrillas boarded the bus and quickly drew their firearms and ordered the driver to turn the bus into a feeder road leading to Mt. Banahaw.

About 300 meters from the highway, the bus passengers saw a waiting jeep with an other group of at least 20 armed men.

The passengers were ordered to alight and shortly after, the rebels poured gasoline on the bus and set it on fire.

At that moment, the 8th week motor of the tanked gas in the rebels' clue PO1 Bienvenido Bernal, assigned to the 4th provincial police mobile group.

The rebels ordered the police officer to lie flat on the ground and disarmed him.

As the bus was burning, one of the rebels shouted, "May kwalakwat ang mga ito ng bus na ito at hindy rebolusyonaryo kaya dapat nag bebigay ng buwis (The owner of the bus owns the revolutionary movement, he does not pay taxes)."

The rebels let the passengers go after the burning and withdrew to Mt. Banahaw. Dalila T. Bathan Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Ex-senator warns vs Cha-cha

FORMER Sen. Ernesto F. Herrera cautioned Congress against what he called a "mad rush to change the charter" in order to convert the country into a parliamentary and federalist state.

"Proponents of the parliamentary system would like people to believe that it is the panacea to the country's ills. But it's not. Presidential or parliamentary, no democracy is a perfect," Herrera said in a statement.

"Should changing our government, for instance, solve our ever-burgeoning budget crisis, or the suffocating debt servicing and debt payments that burden government and take away much-needed money from social welfare, health development programs? I don't think so," Herrera said.

The President had previously said that the country needs a parliamentary government so that "there is more harmony between the executive and the legislature."

Herrera said he is also aware that the presidential candidate of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, Mr. Panfilo Lacson, is also in favor of changing the Constitution.

Gov't gets $683-M Marcos loot

From page A1

pandemic had no choice but to issue the writ of execution that will transfer the funds from the Philippine National Bank to the government coffers.

The funds, which are actually deposited in various banks abroad, have been held in escrow by the PCGG since 1998.

Ministerial, German bank

Because Bates put "interlocutory" on the part of the fund garnishment, it will actually probably stop the writ "within a week," the lawyer said.

PCGG Commissioner Ruben Carranza said it was just a matter of "administrative procedure" can be sent quite soon to pass.

Another lawyer, who asked not to be named, said most of the $683 million had been "hardened safely" in the countries after the high court ruled that it was ill-gotten. However, a German bank in Singapore, Wed 18 AG, is holding $32 million of the funds after Ebrahim Indar Marwali filed contempt a global freeze order on Marcos assets.

Global freeze

But as in May 14, 2003 decision that affirmed "with finality" the forfeiture of the $683 million, the high court rejected Bowe's global freeze order because it violated the lot, bank's authorities and public international law.

The court also said the justice were "waiting to be done" in the case. "The people and the state are entitled to close this judgement, free from technical, captious and oppressive delays, the court says, urging the state to execute the ownership of the Swiss deposits to the rightful owner, the Republic of the Philippines, within the shortest possible time," it added.

The high court said that that the Marcoses were involved this process in the case but they used it to delay the proceedings.

Incorrigible

Carranza said it many first help but the Marcos are but literally might upset try to delay the transfer. "You know how incorrigible and shameless the Marcoses are. No matter how explicit and final the ruling, they will always try to prevent it," he said.

The Supreme Court is expected to remand to the the search office are to be finalfprohibition.

On Dec. 9, 2003, the high court dismissed the four motions filed by the Marcos family to reverse its landmark July 10, 2003 ruling forfeiting the $683 million to being ill-gotten.

Derailing ruling

In its decision last July, the Supreme Court decided to forfeit Marcos' Swiss accounts after his family "failed to justify the lawful source of their acquisition" of the funds. It noted that Marcos and his wife illegally entered only $356,372.42 during his two decade reign.

On Jan. 7, the PCGG through the Office of the Solicitor General filed an urgent motion for entry of judgment, asking the Marcoses are resorting to "all kinds" of maneuvers here and abroad to derail the ruling.

Swiss court authorities have ruled since 1991 that the Marcos deposits were ill-gotten. In 1997 the Swiss Federal Supreme Court placed the funds in an escrow account of the PNB while waiting for a Philippine court ruling on their ownership.

Two conditions

But the Swiss high court set two conditions before the money could be released to the government—that there be a final court judgment and that the government should compensate the thousands of victims of human during martial law.

Congress, however, has not cup of time to pass a law amending the agrarian reform law, which requires that all recovered ill-gotten Marcos wealth be spent on land reform, and allocating about $200 million of the recovered funds to the 4,500 Filipinos who won a class suit against the Marcos estate in Hawaii.

PB-B for victims

Mehta ruling said it would set aside PB 844 law from the forfeited assets for the compensation of the victims.

Marcos was named in a 1986 "people power" revolt and fled to Honolulu, where he died three years later. He never admitted any wrongdoing.

When the secret Swiss deposits were discovered in 1986, the amount stood at $356 million. By 1998, when it was turned over to the PNB, the funds stood at $940 million.

With a report from AP

A HOMETOWN visit by Fernando Poe Jr. on Thursday includes dropping in on his uncle, Alejandro Poe, at the Virgin Mary Cemetery in San Carlos City, Pangasinan. JEN OSORIO

Parties can change candidates . . .

From page A1

a disqualified by any cause."

The disregard of the Comelec were discovered by members of the commission and would be corrected in a resolution to be issued soon.

Looking for savings

PICC the shift to manual elections, Abalos also said the Comelec would try to salvage what it had already procured, starting with the paper for ballots required for the automated elections.

Abalos will meet with representatives of all political parties on Monday to determine if they were amenable to using the computer in the coming manual polls, which would mean about P200 million in savings.

The paper is already protected with security features, he said, adding that it would be a waste if it was not used.

But if this would be much harder to fake," he said, as he showed a sample of the paper to reporters.

Abalos also said the Comelec would be using old ballot boxes although they might have to buy some to replace those which could not be used. He added that the number of replacements would be "minimal."

Overseas vote

One major effect of the high court decision, he said, was on the conduct of the elections for Filipinos abroad. The Comelec would need an additional 1,848 people to man the Board of Elections Inspectors in different countries.

From the original 426, the agency would need to deploy 1,277 people abroad.

Asked if they would need additional budget, Abalos said that they have funds for overall need as a $50-million supplemental allotment from the Department of Budget and Management.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said it was ready to implement manual counting by some 200,000 overseas absentee voters but it needs an additional 1,500 election inspectors.

Additional personnel

Foreign Undersecretary for Special Concerns Rafael Seguis said additional personnel would be requested from the Commission on Elections as part of the DFA Overseas Absentee Voting. He refused to comment on how the new manual operation would affect the speed and safe elections.

Overseas absentee voting is set on April 11 for land-based Filipinos, Friday for Filipino seamen is on March 12. Ballot counting will be simultaneously held with the one in Manila on May 12.

There are a total of 364,187 registered overseas voters. The DFA and Comelec have trained 757 special election board personnel who have been deployed in various Philippine diplomatic posts for the elections.

Dagdag-bawas

In the same forum, Abalos allayed fears that dagdag-bawas might again mar the coming elections.

He pointed out that the Comelec would be able to put the NGOs or any small operator intended to immediately transmit election returns in various areas.

"This is not part of the modified contract. This is independent of the automated counting machines. This is only to find fault for the transmission of results from different parts of the country to the Comelec to prevent any wrongdoing supposing there is foretold cheating like erase election results have already been transmitted to Manila," he said.

This is one way of ensuring no dagdag-bawas," he added.

Training

Another project which was affected by the high court's decision was the training of election officials in the automated process.

The officials are already in Tagaytay City for a four-day training program, instead as now-cancelled in session for the automated system.

But as a consequence, Abalos said the seminar had been transformed into a conference to identify the problems normally associated with the manual system of elections and find ways to solve them under "realistic and doable, given the circumstances."

Some 79 provincial election supervisors, 23 regional election directors, 15 assistant regional directors, 80 election officers, 23 assistant staff members and other Comelec officials are in the city for the conference.

Homework

"What does this prove? Although we are beleaguered by this case, still we don't forget our homework of preparing for and holding the elections. Let me repeat again: As officers, at the risk of my life, I will see to it that elections will be held," he said. With a report from Jerome Aning

FPJ says he's not . . .

From page A1

other Erap" or, at the very least, that they will not vote for Poe in the same poll.

Perhaps finding the analogy slightly off, one of the leaders in the audience yelled, "DNA duplicate, Erap!"

The grey Poe jeans, but he quickly recovered, finding, he replied, "Dress it!"

What was important, he told the crowd of about 1,000 at the quadrangle of De Ungee Mission Poe University Foundation, was that he would not let them down. "Hindi kayo manghihinayang. (You will not regret it). I will do my best."

He might not have a high school diploma, he said, but neither did he carry "political baggage." He was having his "private challenges," with "honesty and sincerity," he said, attacking mild cheers and applause from the audience and from him.

Poe thanked leaders of the Sandiwang ng Maghihirang Pilipino, had been invited by the university for a consultation, the event is a series before their holding mid-different sectors in Isabela province has also been of participation. He was accompanied by Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta, former Sen. Ernesto Maceda and former Negros Oriental Rep. Miguel Romero.

The actor's father had hailed from Ilocos city. He himself was born in Manila, but has relatives in mountaining and Mangaldan, town.

Why FPJ?

The premise that he needs at YMLF were in response to questions, as well as suggestions, from some of his young listeners. Why should they vote for him, they asked. How was he different from the other presidential candidates?

"Hindi akong sinong na kasi bahid kamay (I am not beholden to anyone)," he said. "I am not a politician."

He wouldn't run for president just to do others' bidding, he insisted, and so one should vote for to extend him. "Sa mga naghahalal ... mag-isip-isip rin (those who are planning to do that ... think it over very well)," he said.

"But I really need your help," he told the YMLF crowd.

Main goal

Asked about his priorities, Poe denounced, saying he might be accused of electioneering. But he did say that his main goal was to uplift the people's trust in government.

To the persistent question of how he intended to run the economy, he said, the silent and simple: "Hindi rocket."

He offered himself as no magician. "I did not finish high school but I was able to build an empire through hard work and honest efforts," he explained.

Breadwinner

He urged his audience to be honest, "let's not quit, or we can conquer."

Poe defined "quitting" as "turning over your work to poor people." He knew what it was to be poor, he said, recalling his father's death, which made him the family's breadwinner. If he could do something for the poor, he said, "I would enter into any field."

Questions about the illegal motives came "turning" were conspicuously blanked by the audience, however.

It was Poe's first homecoming since he declared his candidacy and his first media-covered consultation. Bud Bisan, head of the actor's media bureau, thought his candidacy "did well" during the "baptism of fire."

Red carpet

Pangasinan's leaders virtually stationed Poe.

During a consultation with Mayor Antonio Pilar Jr. of nearby Sto. Tomas town, where the actor proceeded from YMLF, the red carpet was rolled out.

The province's top politicians turned out for a welcome that could not of one prepared for nothing, less than a presidential visit.

Poe's party then went to the Universidad de Pangasinan for another dialogue with students. Here, many of the 20 sectors, including some of his bases in Sto. Tomas, had other officials pledged their support. There included Representative Conrado Estrella III (sixth district), Antolin Espino (second district) and Mark Gonzaga (fifth district), all of the Nationalist People's Coalition.

The strongest

Villar, head of the political party Bisig Pangasinan, told Poe: "Sabihin ko sa mga tao (I will tell the people) that you are the strongest."

The statement was a direct contradiction of earlier statements by President Macapagal-Arroyo that Villar, Pangasinan would get all out for her, since her mother hailed from Binalonan and Malasiqui towns.

Urdaneta City Mayor Amadeo Perez Jr. agreed with Villar.

Nor Gen. Oscar Lambino, acting provincial chair of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, said: "We have no beholden (for) our Pangasinense." He clarified, though, that he asked the Lakas leadership for permission to attend the gathering.

Lively

The consultation itself was very lively.

Poe's question: "Di ba mas lamang siya? Ang sa Poe ang mapapatunayan namin Poe. Welcome Poe kayo."

The actor replied: "I like what I see here—Kapangasinan ... para kaming (there's a lot of friendship for me also a lot of laughter). Let's not take politics on the personal level because we have the same goal, which is to help people."

High court ruling moves Abalos to tears

From page A1

awarded decision put the blame for the unresolved political issues squarely on the Comelec.

"Chairman Abalos shed tears in frustration," said Commissioner Luben Resto Cruz, who was present when Mr. Almarquez met with Abalos and key leaders of Congress.

Mr. Hendricks cried but was consoled by the Pres-abinet. "Grandma said, 'Chairman Abalos was ready very emotional.'

Belatedly, the emotional lull on Abalos was explained.

He told reporters at a briefing, "Ayoko na, dito (these elections, expect none na [Maybe I should call it quits]."

Under decision

Would he really resign after May 10? Already, some sectors have clamored for his resignation.

"Well, I might. Because I might go back to politics. Ako, sasabihin ko pa rin, 'Huwag kayo kasi eh, dito mag-aaral, kasama kayo (Politics is heavy. I don't have enemies unlike here where I have numerous enemies) ... nothing sinasabi ko, Abalos said, half in jest.

What a waste

Abalos stated he made the remarks as a preliminary in which he also lamented the Supreme Court ruling that voided the bidding for the Comelec's automated counting machines.

"I decided to resign because I'm sorry saying that these findings were overestimated ..." he said before reading portions of the dissenting opinions issued by some Supreme Court justices.

Abalos also said that he was disappointed that he was unable to implement the first nationwide automated election in the country which he said would have been a "beautiful legacy" of the commission.

"It's frustrating, saying I what is needed," he added.

Abalos was appointed chair of the commission in June 2000; his term ends in 2007.

Asked if he was worried he might be prosecuted even after he resigns, Abalos said he "doesn't care," adding that he firmly believes that the case would not prosper.

According to the Comelec chair, he had thought of resigning even before the decision came out and that his plan had been to do so for the future after the successful implementation of the automated elections.

But he says he said, the commission is set to ask the Supreme Court to reconsider its decision next week.

Evidence-gathering

Abalos said the Comelec was gathering all the pieces of evidence he attachments to its motion for reconsideration.

"In I said, at least to clear our names but, more importantly, the name of the commission. It doesn't mean we will have to defy-defy in the preparations for the elections," he said.

He I said, whatever happens, the elections will proceed as scheduled. He said he will file four motions for reconsideration next week. He is not trying to gather all the evidence that we are supposed to attach to our motion for reconsideration."

Bayanihang Baseco relief drive launched

From page A1

2,500 structures with a total value of P40 million, left homeless some 25,000 people consigned to open spaces. Twenty-three people suffered minor injuries.

The displaced residents have been housed in nine evacuation centers—the Department of Public Works and Highways gymnasium and cargo left warehouse, Rosales Elementary School, Barangay 649 Bureau headquarters, a tuberculosis area, the Iglesia ni Cristo compound, the Ramos Movies Pilotehouse, Cuyo compound and the "tabo-pugo" market.

The evacuees, a third of whom are infants, are exposed to disease. They need food, clothes, utensils and medicines for cough and colds, toiletries, mats, blankets, mats and bedding facilities for babies, maternal wears and other personal necessities.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has P650,000 for distribution. The government agency supplies the evacuation centers 200 sacks of rice, 400 boxes of canned food, 150 cases of purified water, 200 boxes of noodles daily.

The DSWD is calling on the public to donate canned goods, rice, mosquito nets, clothes, medicine, milk and nutritious food for the first 10 days, particularly children.

Donations to DSR may be sent to the DSWD-NCR office through Director Alicia S. Bala, Dominican Sarda and Lorelie Sarda.

Donations for the daily consumption of the evacuees may be sent to the Department of Social Welfare and Development Center, through Dr. Gina M. Bautista. Non-perishable goods like bread, sacos, etc., may be sent to Eva Lumawind, chair of Barangay 649, Barangka Ilaya, Mandaluyong.

For inquiries and details, please see daily print ads in the Philippine Daily Inquirer or you may call the Metro Manila Call Center, 734-8647 to 49 or 27. You may also visit the DSWD-NCR office at 389 San Rafael St., Quiapo. Inquiries may also be directed to the office of the Department of Social Welfare in the Manila City Hall (Tel No. 527-4610 to 527-4660) or the office of the Barangay 649 chair at Tel No. 656-3047.

Roberto moves up by 4

By Jaeg Arcano

LIGNOL all-star tops items list in event dented nine players in the LPGA. Lorie Roberts put himself on the verge of his biggest feat as a golfer yesterday.

The diminutive Roberts survived cling rainfalls early in the round to salvage a 4-over-par 75 and surpassed her lead to four strokes over Lucy Loudcher after the penultimate round of the Philippine Ladies Open golf championship.

Roberts wasted off the challenge of Loudcher, who was only two adrift after the 36th only to yield seven closing bogeys for a 75.

The 27-year-old Roberts, who totaled 149 at the Manila Golf Club course, said she's becoming a lot from her friendship with Jenny Rosales, whose maidenhood earlier she helps design.

"She always reminds me that the round is no longer than the body and that's what helps me survive all the troubles on the course," said Roberts, who played fourth-best last year for her best finish in four attempts.

At least four other players, including two foreigners, still pose a threat though as the event organized by the Women's Golf Association of the Philippines.

Australia's Pamela Bumdall fired an other-77 to be in solo third at 154.

Jaegrabir Jayne Agoo, recovering from the 80s, fished a 75 and moved up to solo fourth at 155.

2nd lead scores. 149—Lorie Roberts (+4) 154—Lucy Loudcher (+9) 154—Pamela Bumdall (+9) 155—Jayne Agoo (+10) 156—Anna Ty (+11) 159—Perpet Linsang (+14) 160—Gerardo Glorioso (+15) 161—Lucia Salvio (+16) 162—Ate Aldaog (+17) Irene Garig (+18) 163 Rita (+19)

ROBERTS carries early lead

Resurgent Fash Liquid five turns back Blu Star

Fash Liquid Detergent battled a sputtering finish yesterday to hold out a 64-61 win over Blu Star Detergent for its second straight victory in the semifinals of the PBL Philippine Cup before another homer crowd at the Pasig Sports Center.

It was the fifth straight win in the season opener for Liquid Powers who boosted their 8-oath feat with a 6-5 ratio (once-set).

Tied to his stubborn, defending champion 200-cm Baron got back at Basilan (3.07, 45 lbs, in likewise rumored to hold of the side lead at 11-2).

The Pure Blenders played in one big spot and refilled the outcome in early in the third quarter when they posted a 61-58 lead.

The packaging of Pacquiao

WHAT do you know about boxing?

I ask you this in the wake of the number of comments reports claiming that Manny Pacquiao is overrated.

"Yes! If he is picked over me Pacquiao is not the country's most famous boxer today. He has become the idol of millions, not only in the Philippines but also in the entire universe. That is because exactly two months ago, on June 10, he scored one of the biggest upsets in boxing history. I refer to Pacquiao's 12th-round knockout knockout of Marco Antonio Barrera. The legend from Mexico City.

Barrera, 29, is an icon for almost 60 fights, he has only five—both losses—with one draw. And to top it, he beat ground-for-ground boxer, he was the people's world champion could not handed any to Barrera.

Before he fought Pacquiao, Barrera was in the world's Top 5 in the featherweight division. He had beaten the best there is or was.

Before the fight, Pacquiao, who just turned 25 last month, was an unranked featherweight, although he was the reigning IBF world super bantamweight champion. He was a 4-1 underdog against Barrera.

With Pacquiao's victory, the boxer has risen higher than Gerbon has ever rode before. He is now the toast of the nation in boxers, he also became a world celebrity overnight.

Making living quads' fastest wallet of instant heroes, Pacquiao gained unprecedented recognition that he soon found himself involved in the political maelstrom. Mindful of Pinoys a condemnation case from Rhoda Mayor (ex-Binibini and Ft. million or so from President Gloria. Indeed, our big fight were with such impact—such as Pacquiao's—could propel the winner to unimaginable heights of stardom. Pacquiao is one that rose to the occasion.

Not celebrity could also become the mother of controversy that originally troubled. Like conflicts in light, a celebrity is an instant magnet to both truths and deceptions.

As time today 10 days after his historic Alajuela win victory, Pacquiao finds himself in the second form of celebrity status—the dark side of it.

Incidents, his own entourage has become his foe. He even sees a road peopled by unfriendly faces that used to be friendly, to and who he usually becomes the unreliable name a celebrity in beating him to opponents—by hook or by crook. Whether he has handled the hostages or not poses a challenge that is sometimes as formidable as the left hook of a foe.

Central to the controversy is the supposed battle for Pacquiao's "foot" between Mayol Mediamix, the fighter's promoter-for-hire in the UK, and Freddie Roach, Pacquiao's American trainer. If the reports are true, Roach has left Pacquiao and will only return if Mahammad is out. Roach and Mahammad had traded charges exceptionally acrimony matters.

The little that we know about Pacquiao's recent fight off the ring points to an unmistakable tug of war between two persons who were both instrumental in making what Pacquiao is today. While Mahammad claimed the fight deal with Barrera that made Pacquiao the Filipino's salary into the celebrity world (it was supposed to be a five-fight deal for the $1-plus-on-US ask), it was Roach who packaged the Filipino into a crowd-pleasing knockout machine. In short, while Mahammad took the risk—and the spotlight—for Pacquiao from boxing, it is Roach's job to ensure that Pacquiao's persona will continue to be in tip-top shape in the fighter's future fights.

But trust me, though, all this word will going on between Mahammad and Roach will amount to nothing. All sound, so far. Once Pacquiao's next fight is called, everybody will suddenly keep quiet. All fair seems—except Dr. Ring's, for long been loving Pacquiao, whose morals and skill at times are far-less.

Boxing, in case you have forgotten, has always been the darkest game in town, second only to politics.

SOUTHBOUND. When the Gov. Antonio "Partner" Cuelling Challenge gets going in the final district of Pangasinan, expect it to be another smashing success, thanks mainly to the organizational expertise of the cycling legend himself, Jesus A. Garcia Jr. All enthusiasts says that no Partner, no SOCCSKSARGEN, no success. Only no cyclists happy at the end of the event but also fatigued, who really adore watching cycling events unfurl in close distance," said Garcia. The 27-km event, featuring some of the nation's top cyclists like Alvin Patrimonio, Antonio Meloni Quintana, will cover the towns of Bayan, Isang, Calaocan, Sta. Barbara, Mapandan, the City of San Carlos and Binmaley, hometown of Gov. "Partner" Soriano. The Partner Challenge is part of the Philippine Army and Defense Independence for Civilian Initiatives. All the best, fellas.

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Singapore has executed more than 400 convicts

SINGAPORE—More than 400 convicts, many foreign migrant workers, have been executed in Singapore since 1991, Amnesty International said Thursday in a damning investigation of the city-state's harsh penalty law.

The human rights group said Singapore had the highest execution rate in the world relative to its population of only four million people and renewed calls on the city-state to abolish the punishment.

Amnesty's findings coincided the Singapore authorities for rewarding few details about executions, urging them to publicize the number of hangings carried out annually and give full information on the offenses and convictions.

In a special report on Singapore, entitled "The death penalty: A hidden veil of executions," Amnesty said it estimated that 400 convicts were put to death (most by hanging—the method of execution—from 1991 to October 2003.

"In a population of just over four million, this is a shocking number," Margaret John, Amnesty's coordinator for Singapore and Malaysia, told AFP.

In its report, Amnesty said: "It is high time for the government to seriously reconsider its entire claiming class the death penalty is a uses a human rights issue."

"By imposing death sentences and conveying out high numbers of executions, Singapore is going against global trends towards abolition of the death penalty."

The watchdog cited a UN report showing that from 1994, 1999, Singapore had a worldhighest rate of 11.57 executions per one million people.

Saudi Arabia was in second place of 4.65, followed by Belarus at 3.20, Sierra Leone at 2.84, Kyrgyzstan at 2.8, Jordan at 2.12 and China at 2.01.

The largest overall number of executions for the same period took place in China, followed by Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Nigeria and Singapore, it said.

Amnesty also emphasized human rights remain up a significant percentage of people executed.

Although Singapore authorities have not published figures for the number of foreign nationals executed over the years, the watchdog percentage is believed to be very high," Amnesty said. AFP

Public defender asks SC to spare death convicts

(continued on page A2)

and help testify for the defense of Echegaray," Acosta told the Supreme Court.

"It would be very much legally absurd to go to trial with the others named suspects herein who are set to be arraigned, yet allow the executions of Lozada and Licas to proceed. Despite the fact that all the nine accused were charged in the said crime," she added.

Deadly consequences

Acosta said the testimony of witnesses that might be presented after the scheduled execution composed "circumstances that ought to delay the execution."

She added: "Can we even fathom the deadly consequences of allowing the execution of Echegaray and Lozada to proceed, while the trial is still ongoing with respect to the other co-accused?

"What if later on, one or both accused Lozada and Licas will be revealed to be innocents? Their sentences subsequently presented after their executions? How can we make both of them alive to rejoice upon the verdict of acquittal?"

Acosta said Mahusay and De Jesus have statements in Lozada's testimony could have a "convincing effect" on the lower court and prove that there was "no conspiracy" among Lozada, Licaros and the other accused.

"Thus," she said, "there is reasonable doubt as to their guilt."

Supervening event

In habeas the PAO's arguments, Acosta used the Supreme Court decision in the case of Leo Echegaray, the first death convict executed in the Philippines after capital punishment was revived in the 1990s.

In Echegaray vs the Secretary of Justice, the tribunal declared that the postponement of the date of execution could be requested if there were "supervening events and circumstances that have transpired (the high court) to intervene."

"We respectfully submit that the latest supervening event of the utter co-accused in this case, as well as the surfacing of new witnesses for the defense, is a supervening event that ought to delay the scheduled execution of (Licaros and Lozada)," Acosta said.

"We, as public defenders, strongly believe that the honorable Supreme Court has on its premier duty in the eyes of the law and our God to stop this emergency and order the postponements of the scheduled executions," she said.

Tortured to confess

Acosta said Lozada had complained that the police tortured him and that the confession he signed on Aug. 12, 1998, had been prepared by the police.

She quoted the Office of the Solicitor General as saying that the death penalty should not be imposed on Licaros and Lozada "in the interest of justice and utility."

"While the government's drive against kidnapping incidents deserves everybody's support, it is precisely when the government's arms are heartiest that courts should be most on guard to protect the rights of the accused," she said.

European envoys' visit to death row irks Palace

(continued on page A2)

the bill but stressed that the envoys should not meddle in the country's administration of justice.

Human dignity

Jay Rak said the visit was not "operationally geared" around the approaching execution of Rodolfo Lozada and Roberto Lara, but was conducted purely to promote the European Union's position against the death penalty.

In a statement, the envoys said the 15-state European Union considered the abolition of capital punishment as an enhancement of human dignity and of the progressive development of human rights.

"The EU does not dispute the seriousness of the crimes for which individuals are convicted and wrongly supports the efforts of the Philippine government to combat crime," they said. "However, the EU remains convinced that the death penalty provides no added value in terms of deterrence. In addition, miscarriage of justice cannot be excluded."

They also said the European Union was "concerned" about the assumption of executions in the country.

Unanimous resolution

Jay Rak recalled that the European Parliament passed a unanimous resolution last December urging that the anti-death penalty stand should be incorporated in the accession negotiations with countries in remaining relations with other countries.

In Malacañang, Bunye said the Philippine government was also aware of the EU position. "But I think they should also respect the stand of the President on that matter," he said.

Prompted by the outrage of the Ormoza Filipino community over a rash of kidnappings late last year, the Macapagal-Arroyo administration reinstated the implementation of the death penalty law only on those convicted of kidnapping and drug trafficking.

Phased restrictions

A hesitant hastings initially wavered the diplomats to merely observe the death row compound from the observation deck, according to Bunye.

He said that Hastings reminded him and that they agreed to "fly" the restrictions on visitors in the interest of transparency.

But the envoys were barred from bringing their video cameras inside the prison and expelled from making physical contact with the inmates.

Teams said the envoys were given a tour of the NBP's main office, the hospital and the visiting room security compound housing convicts sentenced to death or life imprisonment.

The visitors, who arrived at 9 a.m., were divided into three groups and were briefed on the procedures of the death row compound, from which they observed the inmates engaged in exercise chores.

Free discussion

Some envoys were allowed "a free discussion" with inmates, Teams said, "but they were not very inquisitive; they did not ask anything in today that."

Those who made the visit were the Manila-based ambassadors and charge's d'affaires of Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The ambassadors of the Czech Republic and Norway as well as the charge d'affaires of Switzerland were also present, along with the EU delegation's chief ambassador, Lorenzo Angeloni, lawyer Jeanne Gladue of the Free Legal Assistance Group, and Jesuit priest Silvino Borres, who represented the Church-backed Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

After the visit, the envoys met privately with barred officials before holding the press conference at around 11 a.m.

Subtle message

Hastings said the visit was the envoys' "subtle way of telling us" to abolish capital punishment.

"We said there that we just came over the direction of the courts and that Congress is the only one to abolish the death penalty," he said.

Hastings also said there was "no way" to compare the Philippines' correctional system with that of more developed countries.

"We need the death penalty here to reach criminals a lesson," he said, adding that the Philippines' economic growth had been stunted by the unstable peace and order situation.

Teams said the visit could have been meant to pressure Malacañang to reduce the moratorium on the death penalty.

"It's confidence in a means of solving these crimes rather than to impose capital punishment. He will never really know their intentions," he said.

More disciplined than media

A horde of reporters, photographers and camera crew, who had been barred from entering the maximum security compound, gathered in front of its main gate to await the envoys.

When the envoys emerged, there was a scuffle among the journalists to get comments from them or access the best positions for photographs. Police guards were heavily deployed.

Ambassador Andrew Seiken Saiyan was hit in the face with a camera. He later expressed amusement to Hastings, saying they compared to the convicts who were very calm. Hastings told the subject was disorderly and should be the ones put on death row.

Jay Rak said that while touring the NBP hospital and death row compound, they were impressed with the freedom given the inmates.

"They were even seen disciplined than the media people who mobbed us at the gate," he said.

Orange shirt

Jay Rak said the delegation was moved by an inmate who told them that the only difference between a death convict and an ordinary prisoner was the "orange prison shirt."

"That remark came up out of curiosity against the death penalty," he said, adding that they had also been told by prison officials during whenever there was a movement on capital punishment.

No dialogue with GMA

Jay Rak said the ambassadors were disappointed that they would not hold a dialogue with Ms Macapagal, who had directed Foreign Secretary Delia Albert to meet with them.

"They have come to hear how good reasons why she turned down our request for a meeting," he said.

In the Department of Foreign Affairs, Albert said she hoped to meet with the envoys soon.

"They have apparently formally conveyed their stand and we understand their position. However, the Philippine government has made its decision to carry out the sentences of death on our two nationals who have been convicted, sentenced and sentenced," she said.

The diplomats were not able to meet with Lozada and Lara, who are scheduled to die by lethal injection on Jan. 30. The two men were convicted in 1998 and would have been moved to a separate holding area in accordance with maximum rules. With a report from Juliet Labog-Javellana

US bars RP executives from leaving Hawaii

(continued on page A2)

Saying the executives of Philippine telecom firms must first appear before a grand jury in Honolulu, the US Attorney's Office in Hawaii yesterday threw out their plan to leave the island. Hawaii so they could confer with their lawyers.

Between 8: Essay Jr., former secretary and Exchange Commission chair, who was asked to advise Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc. and Bayan Telecommunications Inc., said the business that most of the executives were vulnerable to criticism in the Philippines today has the US Attorney's office refused their request to leave.

"Some of the 30 were planning that their appearance before the grand jury be delayed because they have not been given the opportunity to talk to their lawyers. The US Attorney's office refused to leave them," Essay said in a phone interview. "The US attorney told them that they cannot leave because they still have to testify before the grand jury."

Stranded

Among those subpoenaed, according to two Filipino witness executives in Manila, were eight executives of Bayantel: Leong Hoe, Domingo Ge., including Roy Ye, Al Pedillo, Ramon Diaz and Richard Poon; Bayantel consultants Sherry Anne Sepiedra, Tonde Palmares and Rodey Ca.; before the Chairman of Bayantel Manuel Institute of Capriles, Fernando Cosa, Gil Genio and facility lawyer of Globe Telecommunications Undersecretary Virgilio Delos, Perla Ignacio of Digitel, Beatriz Lim-Cruz of Isaacson Telecommunications Philippine Inc. and another ETPI executive, Bobby Castro of MCI Philippines; Rodolfo Cardeo of AT&T Philippines, and Jose Peñaranda, the Bayantel consultant of the government.

Price fixing?

The US justice department wanted the subpoenas to the executives so Monday in the state by sanctions telecommunications carriers, including AT&T and MCI, that the Philippine firms violated the US anti-trust law by conspiring to price fixing to compel the US carriers to pay the higher termination rates.

Termination rates are charges that an originating carrier pays for the completion of its subscribers' calls on a foreign carrier's network. Rates were jacked up to 11 US cents per minute from 8 US cents for landline calls and to 16 US cents per minute from 12 US cents for mobile phone calls.

Firm opposition

While most of their foreign counterparts agreed to the rate increase after some negotiation, AT&T Corp. and MCI International stood firm in their opposition, which led to a case against the Philippine carriers with the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Although the FCC and the Philippine National Telecommunications Commission had already reached an "understanding" on how to resolve the issue once and for all, the US justice department still served the subpoenas on the 20 Philippine telecom executives.

The Department of Justice Angeles Al Bitz has directed Honolulu hospitals, the Philippines' consul general to Hawaii, to lend assistance to the stranded executives.

No representation

Witnesses such as the telecommunications executives who appear before the grand jury are not allowed representation. They, however, can invoke their rights to remain silent if they feel coerced, for table with the questions posed by the grand jury.

The questioning that started yesterday morning would take several days at least before the grand jury can finish interviewing all the executives, according to Essay.

The executives have not been accused of anything and it is still within the authority of the US Attorney's office to prevent them from leaving, Essay said.

A setup

But he said that the investigation smacked of bad faith on the part of the American lawyers, the top executives were in Hawaii to attend the annual Pacific Telecommunications Convention, which is aimed to enhance trade opportunities for the countries of the region and to promote US investments.

"The subpoenas were served on the executives in Hawaii, where they have been summoned to Singapore since 1991, Amnesty International said Thursday in a damning investigation of the city-state's harsh penalty law.

The human rights group said Singapore had the highest execution rate in the world relative to its population of only four million people and renewed calls on the city-state to abolish the punishment.

Amnesty's findings coincided the Singapore authorities for rewarding few details about executions, urging them to publicize the number of hangings carried out annually and give full information on the offenses and convictions.

In a special report on Singapore, entitled "The death penalty: A hidden veil of executions," Amnesty said it estimated that 400 convicts were put to death (most by hanging—the method of execution—from 1991 to October 2003.

"In a population of just over four million, this is a shocking number," Margaret John, Amnesty's coordinator for Singapore and Malaysia, told AFP.

In its report, Amnesty said: "It

NTC exec not even given time to pack her stuff

By Abigail L. Ho

ERR HOSTER was so abrupt that she was not even given time to pack her things and deal with some unfinished business at the National Telecommunications Commission.

Although aware of rumors that she was to be removed, NTC chief Nerio Jose Regis did not think it would happen so quickly.

Wednesday told me that I would be given one month to wind up here. But then they said they'll be here tomorrow," Regis said in a telephone interview Wednesday.

Regis said she expects to be given her walking papers today after Undersecretary Henrique Peres of the presidential search committee called on her at the NTC headquarters in Quezon City on Wednesday to inform her of her ouster.

JIL members

Over the weekend, the industry was abuzz with talk that Malo, cabang was preparing to kick out Regis because of her rejection of the proposal of Malacañang loader and presidential supporter Bro. Eddie Villanueva.

Villanueva reportedly refused Palace intention to bank the candidacy of President Macapagal-Arroyo and instead declared his intention to run for President himself.

Industry observers believed that being a member of Villanueva's JIL automatically made Regis a target for removal.

Suspicions

A source said the coming of Regis's removal was highly suspect coming as it did so close to the May elections.

The source said some industry players were apprehensive that Malacañang would replace her with someone who might be used to "favour" them for campaign contributions.

The NTC is a very powerful agency serving as the regulator of some of the country's most important and most profitable firms—the broadcast networks and cellular phone companies.

Regis is being removed because of her affiliation with the JIL. But she is also being kicked out so that they can use the NTC to raise campaign funds from the telecommunications firms, although the new NTC commissioner, the source claimed.

BUSINESS

E-mail us at ...
Website: ...

John Paul O. Morada
Assistant Editor Cecile S. Marinas

BOP surplus shrinks to $108M in '03

By Bob C. Bonoan

THE PHILIPPINES incurred a balance-of-payments (BOP) deficit of $77 million in December due to outflow arising from debt servicing, reversing the full-year surplus to $108 million or 84 percent lower than the surplus in 2002.

A strong peso in the country's external payments despite a run of dreggle reports, however, was noted as remittances from overseas Filipino workers that hit $6.9 billion in the January to November first year to 4.8 percent better than a year ago, according to data released by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday.

Also, net foreign portfolio inflows to the Philippines surged by seven times domiciled to $270.8 million in 2003 from $35.7 million a year ago, reflecting a dramatic improvement in investors confidence, the BSP said.

"Positive developments such as the strong gains in both bonds and stocks, the generally lower client rates of foreign debts and inflation rate figures, reduced interest rates and high oil prices are large apparently outweighed the negative factors such as the US-Iraq war, the SARS outbreak and the lingering security and political concerns, insofar as the foreign investors were concerned," the BSP reported.

Based on monthly reports submitted by the five largest commercial banks, non-resident investments in all types of portfolio investments registered net inflows during the year.

Portfolio investments refer mainly to funds placed in equities listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange, government securities, money market instruments and peso bank deposits.

Investments in FDI, based on preliminary reports, registered a net inflow of $307 million. Investments in non-ether-money market instruments amounted to $163 million and peso bank deposits valued at $464.8 million.

The $77-million BOP deficit in December, according to Bangko Sentral Governor Alfredo Thumper A., was mainly due to payments made for servicing debts. The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the country's economy and the rest of the world.

For the full year, the smaller BOP surplus was due to the first-ever drawdown made in Bangko—a key component of the current account—despite the increase in the global economy.

Based on the latest report from the National Statistics Office, the country's export earnings increased by only 0.5 percent in January to November to $32.44 billion from a year ago.

Philippine exports have not recovered enough as demand in the United States, the country's biggest market, was also being killed by China and Malaysia, countries that were giving the country a stiff competition in semiconductors assembly and among.

Meanwhile, the BSP said that for the month of November alone, OFW remittances hit $579 million or 9.4 percent lower than a year ago.

"The reduction in the foreign exchange market might have encouraged OFWs to delay remittances on expectations of further depreciation which would yield higher peso equivalents," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said.

Court junks La Suerte bid for tax reprieve

By Michelle V. Rose

THE PARANAQUE City Regional Trial Court (branch 257) on Wednesday dismissed the petition of La Suerte Cigar and Cigarette Factory for an injunction on a revenue ruling that will increase excise tax liability by as much as 300 percent.

With this decision issued by Judge Antonio Reyes Estrada, the controversial Revenue Regulations No. 22-2003 will soon be fully implemented.

Under the regulations, the tax imposed on cigarettes' brand and retail price now depends on the previous 11 12-pack packs to P5.50.

The decision will be based on a previous market survey conducted by the Bureau of Internal Revenue which showed that the average retail price of Hanabishi and Astro cigarettes had increased to a range of P7 to P8.50, thereby making La Suerte liable to pay a tax rate of P5.00 per pack.

The BIR imposes the following tax rates on cigarette brands: P1.1 (per pack) for cigarettes costing below P5; P5.00 per pack for those that cost between P5 and P6.50; P6.00 per pack for cigarettes priced between P6.50 and P10; and P10.44 for those that cost above P10.

"We now have to pay taxes based on the redenominated rate, but we still do that under protest," a company source said in an interview, adding that company representatives would meet the supervisor from Finance Secretary Isidro [illegible]

BSP maintains policy rates

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE POLICYMAKERS: Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday decided to keep its key overnight rates steady given a benign inflation environment.

The latest policy review, however, reiterated continued caution on the part of the BSP in view of continuing risks to inflation, including foreign exchange volatility.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the board decided to keep its key policy rates unchanged at 6.75 percent for overnight borrowing and 9 percent for overnight lending.

"During its review of the prevailing macroeconomic and financial conditions, the board noted that inflation prospects remained favorable," Buenaventura said.

The BSP chief said inflation was expected to rise by a moderate 4.5 percent this year, consistent with a projected rise in output growth, improvement in aggregate demand and government fiscal adjustments in import tariff rates and utility charges.

"At the same time, the inflation outlook also considers the risks stemming from concerns over domestic political conditions, which may influence the movements of the exchange rate and financial variables with potential inflationary effects," Buenaventura said.

The Monetary Board also acknowledged some downside risks to economic growth—such as the modest pace of money and credit demand as well as the "generally uneven" trends in other economic indicators.

Apart from making overall policy in monetary terms, Buenaventura cited the sizeable stock of non-performing loans hounding the banking system as among those "uneven" indicators.

Liberal vs conservative approach in foreign trade

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

FOR international trade, is it better to be liberal or conservative? This question will be tested in the remaining days before the Senate adjourns for elections. The Senate will determine the fate of SB 1884, a bill that bans most products imported from foot-and-mouth disease (FMD)—infested countries. The House of Representatives has unanimously passed this bill without a single abstention. Now the Senate must make its move.

COMMENTARY

The issue

The issue is whether to keep the current liberal approach of allowing the importation of meat products from FMD-infested countries following the guidelines set by the Office Internationale des Epizooties (OIE), or adopting the conservative approach embodied in SB 1884.

At a meeting convened by the Senate committee on agriculture last Jan. 6, Manuel Luz, marketing director of the National Federation of Hog Raisers Inc., asserted that the OIE guidelines were merely recommendatory. He cited several countries that took the conservative approach of safeguarding their animal health by providing additional guidelines to those prescribed by the OIE.

In the same meeting, Dr. Leopoldo Stehli cited a scientific statement made showing that following OIE guidelines resulted in significantly decreased risk; only one contamination in every 100,000 tries. While Dr. Stehli admitted that some countries decided to take this risk because of various reasons such as economics or low level of livestock, he argued that the Philippines could not afford such a risk.

Computation

Assuming one contamination in 100,000 tries, Dr. Stehli argued that the chances of contamination for last year's 15 million kilos of carabeef importation from India would be 330 for that year, or a risk of one and a half chances of contamination per day.

Considering that only one contamination can spread rapidly to result in the 15 billion in losses that occurred in 1994 when there was an FMD epidemic, this risk was not acceptable to the hog raisers. They said this would jeopardize the livelihood of the more than three million people involved in the entire industry today.

It would also mean the loss of potential jobs for significant exports which are facing FMD-free Today, our country is almost there. Mindanao, the Visayas, Palawan, and Masbate are already FMD-free. Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo personally appeared in a previous Senate hearing to plot the SB position supporting SB 1884 for risk and biosecurity reasons.

Independent verification

When I called Dr. David Wilson, international trade department head of the OIE based in Paris last Friday, he confirmed what Mr. Luz had said that some countries took the conservative position by adding measures to the OIE guidelines to safeguard their animal health. He said they were justified in doing this, as long as there was scientific basis and consistent application. He confirmed this in writing, a copy of which is now with the Senate committee on agriculture.

Consumers

Francisco Buencamino of the Philippine Association of Meat Processors narrowly pointed out that taking this conservative position would penalize the consumers. They would have to pay approximately 20 percent more if the processors use regular beef instead of Indian carabeef. Deprived of this inexpensive carabeef, the planned 15-percent expansion of many processing plants in this area would not materialize. This is because the consumers might now prefer the less expensive chicken and pork products. Thus, some jobs might be lost, though these jobs might be taken up by the additional chicken and pork processing.

Bernardo Cuenco Jr., president of Pearl Foods Inc., is not bothered. He supports the banning of carabeef from India, not only to prevent FMD contamination but also to have a more normal functioning of meat product pricing.

"Why should imported carabeef that carries the risk of FMD infection upset the normal price relationship found in most societies where beef is more expensive than pork and chicken?" he asks.

Jobs

Beating the importation of Indian carabeef would entail less than 6 of meat products by 15 million kilos. Assuming that a small backyard raiser grows 20 pigs a year and sells them at a combined equivalent of 1.5 kilos per pig, there could be 15,000 new jobs for backyard raisers who will benefit from this import substitution. Conversely, if the 15 percent annualized growth rate in carabeef importation takes place this year, 7,950 backyard raisers may be displaced.

Vicente Jabo, one of the leaders of the one million member Alyansa Agrikultura, says: "In these difficult times, it is too much to ask our consumers to sacrifice some of their corned beef consumption or help our Filipino poor with jobs! This will also allow our domestic cattle industry to compete without the specter of Indian carabeef with FMD contamination risk at the very low combined price of 90/kilo."

Conclusion

The Senate has to decide whether to take the current liberal approach of allowing meat importation from FMD-infested countries with the attendant risk of FMD infestation, or follow the conservative practice of several countries in banning this importation for improved biosecurity.

Both the liberal and conservative positions have merit. Each senator must now vote based on position, with the votes recorded for guidance in the coming elections. What would be most unfortunate is that no vote is taken at all, thereby lending credence to the unfortunate perception that for some, agriculture and its farmers are not important after all.

The author is chair of Agrimark, a private sector initiative, former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agrimark@pldt.net.ph or text/fax 02 853 5625.

Tai-panic travel advisory

COCKTAILS

Hyder C. Agrabio

AMALIA Pangilinan Antonio Lorenzo, the Tabol brothers, the cookie-prince, the Lopezes, and even Ambassador Alfonso Yuchengco have been advised to stay out of the United States because of the ongoing grand jury investigation in Hawaii against alleged antitrust violations by the Philippine telecommunications companies.

The board members of Globe Telecom, including their Singaporean partners, have been specifically advised not to even make a response to any US request or query of any kind in the next six months.

According to the legal grapevine, had the above-named telecom moguls also attended the now-concluded Pacific Telecom Conference in Honolulu, they too would have had been served subpoenas by FBI agents. Just like what the US federal officers had sprung on to the 30 Filipino conference delegates.

The subpoenas had been served on the executives of 11 Philippine telecom companies that do business with or maintain offices in the United States. Leading executives in the dominant PLDT (smart) combine as well as longer-known Bell Communications Co.

Even the radio-TV outfit ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. had not been spared.

Initiated by the US Department of Justice upon the complaints of US telecom firms, the US District Court section to comply to the anti-trust investigation of telecoms that resulted in multibillion-dollar settlements likewise had to conclude with various corporate closeouts and some had to this break-up of the US telecom giant.

One of the subpoenas served were had the nickname of the particular Filipino executive alongside that of the top round full name, leading evidence to the speculation that the US telecom firms were hired Manila-based investigators to track down their Philippine counterparts.

In addition to the Filipinos being ordered to testify the branches in their cities commanded the following Philippine telecom companies to produce truckloads of original/conformed/signed, and/or notarized documents and corporate records "that relate to the business of providing international termination services ... and international correspondent services in the Philippines" from January 2000 up to the present.

As still, telephone toll records, e-mail correspondences, appointment diaries, travel and expense vouchers, credit and charge card statements of "officers, directors, managers or planners involved in international services" were also be forwarded to the Attorney General, Enforcement Section, Antitrust Division of the US Department of Justice in Washington, DC, care of lawyer Renee Inglis.

Failure to cooperate, withholding or destruction of the subpoenaed documents could lead to

CONTINUED

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Court junks ...

From page B1

Samsung to file an anti-dumping appeal.

In its particularized explanation, Lt Sandy said RR 22-2000 was "unfair" because it only covered new expensive brands, such as Memphis and Astro, and excluded old ones.

New expensive brands are those that have been introduced in the market after the implementation of the new Tax Code in 1997, while old ones are those that have been in the market prior to that year.

With the new tax rate of 55 (6), Lt Sandy said, Memphis and Astro will now cost at most P12 per pack, which is much higher than the 20 or 35 of its counterpart brands that have been existing in the market before 1997.

The source said Lt Sandy's management was set to discuss how to cope with the new tax rate imposed on its expensive brands, adding that one way could be to reduce Memphis and Astro in the market and for all kinds of as much as 1,000 single packs.

14 firms seen bidding for exploration deals

By Reinnel W. Domingo

AT LEAST 14 foreign firms are expected to take part in the first round of the bidding for the country's petroleum exploration blocks slated in March, the Department of Energy said.

Energy Undersecretary Lilibeth A. Mahilac said the companies have indicated interest in bidding for contracts to explore for oil and gas in 46 of the country's promising petroleum provinces that are up for grabs in the First Petroleum Contracting Round or PCR-1.

These firms, including Kuwait Oil, Norsk Hydro and Total, Asian firms Gaming Oil and Petra Petroleum, and US firms ChevronTexaco, Amerada Hess, Kuwait Oil, Occidental Petroleum, Marathon and ExxonMobil.

The deadline for the submission of bids was set on March 2 and the DOE expects to award the contracts to the winning bidders by May.

Interest in PCR-1 was generated after its launch in Manila last August and the subsequent international promotional tour that we completed in October," Mahilac said.

The tour included visits to Singapore during an international industry conference, as well as London and Houston, Texas, where a DOE team put up an information center for investment investors.

DOE records show that the country has an average recoverable petroleum resource equivalent to at least 8.9 billion barrels of oil, 85 percent of which has yet to be discovered.

Of the total petroleum resources, natural gas accounts for an equivalent of 5 billion barrels of oil, crude oil represents 3.6 billion barrels while condensates covers 200 million barrels.

The country currently produces 500-600 barrels of oil, 230-260 billion cubic feet of natural gas and 25,000 barrels of condensates each day.

Last Wednesday, the DOE signed a petroleum service contract (SC) with Premier Oil Philippines BV of the British Isles, the first such deal in six years.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. said the new deal is expected to bring in investments of between $4.6 million and $11.6 million or about P263 million to P663 million in the exploration stage alone.

He said the contract covered some 1.09 million hectares within the Southeast Luzon basin over Bagay Gulf and parts of the Bondoc Peninsula.

Cocktales . . .

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charges of obstruction of justice, the same charge that brought the downfall of President Nixon in the Watergate burglary investigation.

According to the grapevine, the Filipino software companies will refuse to hand over the document to the US Department of Justice on the ground that the subpoenas had been improperly served.

Alongside the subpoenas to the Filipino software delegates, the "documentary" subpoenas had been served at the Honolulu hotel rooms, mostly in the middle of the night, where the Filipino delegates had been staying. The San 21 14 conference itself had been organized by the Honolulu-based Pacific Telecommunications Council, which later issued a statement of support for the surprise FBI operations.

According to the grapevine, rather than pool their resources and save on litigation costs, the different Filipino telecom companies have decided to retain different US counsels to avoid giving credence to the US accusation of collusion.

Their possible, common line of defense: Question the jurisdiction of US courts and federal agencies in extortion, investigation and prosecute non-US companies.

Heard through the grapevine

THE NOSE over the 30 percent increase in assessment does to medieval condos has resulted. The court, with singer and comic Filma Cayagan-Asensio filing a civil complaint against the Rockwell homeowners' association.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Politics Without Principle

Because we believe that the legitimacy of government derives from the deepest aspirations of its people, we are dismayed and disappointed at the decisions made by the administration party on its candidates for the May elections and wish to express our alarm and concern about the extent to which the spirit of EDSA is being sacrificed to the altar of political expediency and in the name of electoral victory.

At what price - this concept of healing and reconciliation without contrition? This peace without justice?

We recognize that electoral politics is often played beyond the ideal, especially in our context. There are bitter realities that have to be faced squarely to win elections. But it was Mahatma Gandhi that reminded us of seven blunders of the world, and one of which is ***politics without principle***. Will there be anyone among our national leaders vying for the people's votes who will lead the way to uplift our nation toward a new vision based on principled politics?

The May 2004 elections will be another defining moment in our history as a young republic. It is and should be about bringing closure to a generation of plunder and corruption. It is and should be about building new generation of citizens and leaders able to face boldly the enormous challenges ahead.

We call on the GMA administration, therefore, to save what is left of its image as the keeper of EDSA 2 spirit by aggressively pursuing serious economic and political reforms in its remaining months in office and by serving the legitimate grievances of EDSA 3 constituencies but not necessarily coddling and giving way to opportunism.

We call on our colleagues in civil society to give utmost importance to the coming electoral exercise. We call on ourselves to organize, educate, and mobilize the broadest ranks of our own constituencies to ensure not only a highly credible election but also the victory of the candidates that epitomize the spirits of EDSA 1 and 2: integrity, social justice, and good governance!

Agrarian Reform Now! (AR-NOW!) * Bulay Mindanao Foundation * Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) * Cordillera Network of NGOs & POs (CORDNET) * Jesefa Segovia Foundation, Inc. * KASAPI * Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA) * Philippine Community Organizers Society (PhilCOS) * Social Democratic Caucus (SDC) * Visayas Network of Development NGOs (VIDNET) * National Council of Social Development (NCSD) * National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) * Leyte CODE * Iloilo CODE * Pambansang Kilusan ng Samahang Magsasaka (PAKISAMA)

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Editor Chato Bamad-Formoso

Superlative yet modest

Low-key Meki Reyes Saldaña will try to outcatwalk the world's best in the Supermodel of the World search

WHAT'S IN A NAME? Meki, who wears a deep purple corset by Eufo, got her name from a high-schoolfriend with an "R" (what). Instead of Mary Ann, the fellow pronounced her name as Meki Ann. The name stuck.

MEKI and her trademark cheekiness

Text by Ana Y. Vergara
Photos by Chito Pestaño

UNTIL Mary Ann "Meki" Reyes Saldaña won the local search for Supermodel of the World last month, her father didn't have a clue that his daughter had entered the contest organized by Runway Productions.

Now the whole country and perhaps the rest of the world is bound to know of her exploits as she competes with 50 or so models from the world over this Tuesday in New York (Wednesday in Manila).

Even Meki, a first-year nursing student, didn't expect to win or for first try like ours can, plan to leave for and "gain experience" as she said after some Jaapanese educational but easier to summon organizers. Before joining, Meki was finishing campus activities and school attempt to become one of IMS's in house models.

"She didn't want to win since she knows it will disrupt her studies," says mother Mariana, one of Meki's "accomplices." "She wanted for my late to the audition so it took her several seconds to react when her name was finally called."

Parents' blessings

Since she knew her husband Cipe would lose none of it, Mariana had to concoct an excuse to make it possible for Meki, the third of four children, to join the contest. She let eventually found out, and after some prodding from Mariana he finally relented to allow Meki to pursue modeling.

"We're not about to stand in the way of his dreams of becoming a model," says Mariana. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance, which she can learn and hopefully earn from. But my husband and I have also impressed upon her the importance of getting a finished education."

Meki, who flies today for the Big Apple with Runway's big boss, Jory Fajilan, will travel abroad for the first time in her life. On top of several sets of armor clothes, she brings with her a months worth of intensive training on such essentials as walking, posing for the camera, makeup and grooming, public speaking and stock budgeting.

In spite of her lucky orthodox, however, Meki was still able to attend classes at the De La Salle University in Dasmariñas, Cavite. She had to travel all the way from Ortigas, Mariano Abacan, where she lives, to attend daily trainings and photo shoots in Manila. Should modeling get in

(LOOK, A STORY ON)

SHE goes casual in a white top and denim mini and denim skirt by Eufo.

MEKI spreads her wings in Raja Laoral's olive-gray silk jersey gown with a draped hoodies and shoulder coat.

Superlative yet modest

Turn to page B-3

the way of her education, MeKi has pursued her parents to resume her studies three years from now.

MeKi, a UP, is the first to admit that she is conventional beauty like set of upturned eyes, square jaw and high cheekbones, however, caught the eyes of people from the prestigious Real Modeling Agency the idol's dent organizers.

It was no easy victory. Out of more than 1,000 hopefuls, the number of contestants was trimmed down to 14. Bayou and his staff sent their pictures, including MeKi's, to New York winner Bartholomew.

"I didn't expect myself to go this far," says MeKi, who considers model-turned-VJ Small Moves as her idol. "I was initially intimidated since many of the girls were a lot prettier, taller and more confident than I. Some of them are in fact already professionals."

MeKi eventually got the hang of it, and before the night was over since was savvy with the Bulo Runway Award. She and several finalists, including crowd favorite Christine Reyes, became the latest addition to Gail Gozon's International's growing stable of models.

SUNSET catches her in a true prince miniature by Rolan Mata.

The modeling agency, which provides its models international exposure, is a sister company of Kuizon Productions.

"Many people were also scoring for MeKi," says Sec Subada, one of the agency's senior bookers. "Many were happy when she was TV-worked with quite a number of models, and I say MeKi's trademark cheekbones and proper proportions are her assets."

MeKi is in good company, as she sees pass the ranks of Melanie Marquez, Sweetie in Love and Adele Go, local models who once represented the country in international modeling tilts abroad.

Tangle of emotions

"I feel a tangle of conflicting emotions right now," she confesses. "I'm excited for at the same time nervous, especially since I'm seeing after Victor Basilio who coached Sarsop to find true. Whatever happens, I'll give this my best shot."

Because of her desire to live a normal life, MeKi has instructed her family to keep her victory a secret even from neighbors. She has also what kept a low profile in school. In fact, the morning after the contest, she ran for Lakbay ng Liwasan and nothing had happened.

"Of course, everybody knows that Mary Ann Reyes-Subdada's days of anonymity are now numbered.

E-mail the author at www.pa@inquirer.com.ph

Discover your creativity

GOINGS ON

THE WORKSHOP "Tapping the Creative Genius" is designed to help increase identify and reinvent the blocks that stand in the way of creativity in everyday life. Conducted by Ana Gonzales, the workshop aims to instill positive that will help participants overcome obstacles and to awaken their innate and natural creative inspiration. Some two-hour sessions spread over two weeks. For workshop schedule, enquiry levels inquire Imelda at "The Artist's Way" By Julia Cameron and Mark Bryan and Dunlap and practices to access the creative artist. Call 426-0195, 0918238 or 4350208.

WORKSHOP A workshop session to handle grief is set Feb. 8-11 at Silverstone Cares in Antipolo City. It aims to help people cope with the loss of loved ones. Family members counselors will spearhead the sessions. Call 0917 708 or 0917-4727178.

ITALIAN CLASSES Starting Jan. 20, the Philippine-Italian Association (PIA) will offer 40 hour Beginners and Advance Italian courses. Courses will be held 2-4 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday, at the PIA Secretariat, 2/F Lily Building, 119 Tordesillas Street, Legaspi Village, Makati. Call 810 0318.

MUSICAL Kontrapunto Theater Foundation presents "Stuffedbag," Jan. 16-19 and Feb. 6-8, at the MT Theater, Trinoma Appendix. Cast includes Chino Trinidad, Perante Sanchez, Jinky Laxamana, Pocholo Real Gutierrez, Jonathan Gaspar, Gino Hernandez, Mikki Bermudez, Norman Dandantes, Paolo Ferrer, Rommel Rodero, Lyn Francisco and Richard Digbay.

FUNDRAISER The fundraising raffle sponsored by the Farnsworth College Committee on Alumni Hall Assembly, Inayo Antonio M. Zamora and Ex-corporation Q. Bernardo will be held 7 p.m. Feb. 14 in the Bahay ng mga Kwentong Bayan, Farnsworth College, Alabang Campus. Tickets for a Dinner and ticket sales for fundraising Barbara Llanes. Current tickets will be considered valid. Call 0918267.

UPDATE your drawdown cardigans or collared tops by wearing a scarf in a '70s flat-fold. Floral scarf from Gucci, top from Wish by Shruti Ezra and gold pearls from Jewelmar

STILL a bit hesitant to get into the fashion bandwagon? Keep things simple and understated by wearing your basic denim with a satin-finish top and gold flats. Lemon yellow bag from JB. Bonnet Ladies Khaki trousers and dress from Codes

SO all out glam in a feminine gold sequined dress and matching sandals for more formal affairs. Vivienne Tam dress and Vera Wang high-heeled sandals

COMBINE casual trends and look like a hip fashionista. Tongue-in-cheek floral T from Paul Smith, Bella Dahl Vintage Chic straight-cut jeans, Unisa bright green mules and gold sandals from CNC

How to wear the latest trends

LAST week, I presented a list of the hottest trends and fashion must-haves from some of Mumbai's industry insiders.

It's always an advantage to know what the hits are for the season ahead, especially if one wants to improve and update your manner of dressing. Unfortunately, it's not enough to just know what the latest fads are.

Based on the letters that readers have been sending me, quite a number of individuals are not savvy enough to know 'how' to incorporate new trends into their already existing wardrobe. So, to help out eager but clueless fashionistas, here are some of the latest trends and how to wear them.

Brights

Vivid colours like lemon yellow, green, hot pink, aqua and red, to name a few, are great for both evening and day looks.

The younger or more adventurous set can combine lime-zest or a hot pink tee and a pair of orange capris for casual occasions. For dressier events, a chiffon or satin lingerie-inspired dress in red, green or aqua is all it takes to make an entrance.

Those who are a bit shy about wearing bold, luscious colours can now an item or two to update their wardrobe. Spice up neutrals like jeans, a black skirt or khaki chinos with bright coloured polo shirts or tees.

Or use accessories like brilliant-coloured bags and shoes or wooden (with coloured clasps to add colourful color. Big, bright baubles in the form of necklaces, bracelets, earrings or rings can also liven up any drab outfit.

Prints

All sorts of prints, from stripes, polka dots, Pucci or Missoni-inspired, were all over the runways for spring/summer 2004 fortnight.

But according to Harper's Bazaar (January 2004), femininity asserted itself in the form of patches and bib florals that were inspired by places like Hawaii, Phuket and Tahiti, and which looked fresh when piled on layer upon layer.

Make a statement by wearing a prints summer dress with stunning multihued flowers. Or combine several different prints to create a unique and eye-catching look. You can balance off the look with the use of solid-coloured sandals.

If you are not comfortable wearing bold prints, there are more understated versions to choose from. Stripe versions would be your best bet. You can also combine solids and prints by wearing a floral tee with plain bottoms or a solid top with a printed flowery skirt.

Still not certain about how to wear this trend? Start out by matching your regular wardrobe like jeans and a tee with flowery bags or watches or footwear.

Gold

Dittery gold dresses in [illegible] of the 1980s, shoulder-padded evening wear) you'll make stunning choices for your evening affairs.

Go all out by wearing a glamorous gold dress. That's dripping in beads. Or choose the subtle route by using just one golden, beaded or sequined item with a simpler article of clothing such as a gilt camisole worn with a flirty chiffon skirt.

For day, learn to mix gilt pieces like a shiny knit top or skirt with your ordinary-or-everyday clothes like tan-khaki colored tees or denim blouses.

Gold bags and shoes, not necessarily worn together and matched with everyday or evening clothes, are also easy ways to get into the gold trend. Or start wearing jewellery that's not in yellow gold to add some bling into your outfits.

1950s

Think Ann Landers or Jane's "Retro Look." Full skirts, whether solid or printed, matched with button-down tops or tiny cardigans, will give you a feminine flourish. Accessorise with a scarf tied in a Grace Kelly fold for a more retro feel.

For a modern, more dressed-down spin, wear a full skirt with a retro tee and ballet slippers. Or simply wear the scarf in a '50s flat fold with your modern button down and trousers or jeans.

Femininity

Although stylised sportswear is still very much in, there is an obvious shift in a more romantic and almost feminine direction in fashion.

Achieve this look with the use of soft materials like chiffon, pastelish dresses in all, white, khaki colors, lingerie-inspired frocks, hourglass-shaped dresses and ruffled or flared skirts and the like.

If all out femininity is not for you, try wearing a (rarely) "boyfriend sweater" (sweaters with various collars and cuffs) with a flowy pleated skirt to create an interesting combination. Or try donning a lacy chiffon camisole with jeans and high-heeled sandals.

Remember, it's always advantageous to mix unmixed pieces with your fashion finds to create different looks. And as always, dress to suit yourself, your personality and body type and you simply won't go wrong.

Most importantly, though, don't be afraid to experiment and express your individuality so you can develop your own fearless sense of style that will set you apart from the crowd.

E-mail the author at spandrea@hotmail.com

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberoi-Sindhvani

Tutto Moda brings together the major Italian denim brands in just one roof

Milan at your fashion doorstep

ANTONIETTE wears a Compagnia Italiana beige bomber jacket (P1,650), Armani black tank top (P1,950) and Pierre Mack boot-cut pants (P4,800). Rob wears an (Alt+) Moda brown jacket (P1,650), Archivio Dellamore white tee (P850) and (Alt+) Moda black pants (P1,350).

ON HER: Pure white detailed long-sleeve dress shirt (P1,250 each), Alt+ Moda black pinstriped pants (P1,850). Archivio Black long-sleeve shirt with draw prints by Dolce (P1,450) and Pierre black straight-cut pants (P4,800).

ON HER: Sunlight green sleeveless top (P1,250 each), Alt+ Moda military green overskirt (P1,450). On him: Black oversized tee by Dolce (P1,250) and (Alt+) Moda military green pants (P1,350).

Text by Chenzie V. Pineda
Photos by Chito Nicdao

HERE'S a piece of good news for the Men You for the savvy dresser: The world of fashion has gotten a lot smaller.

With the opening of a new zone for (you-actually-) that denim trip to Italian capital Milan to experience the fashions of Italian fashion becomes a reality to local fashionistas and urban pedestrians.

Truly is now at the doorsteps of every big cosmopolis with these specialty biz. (The Moda boutique. The shop's name literally means "everything fashion," and it stands true to its moniker with its many mix of over 20 labels.

While such household names as D&G, Armani, Diesel and Gianfranco Ferré top the Men Moda list, it also brings in lesser known but equally stylish brands sure to ensure the trend coverage of chic urbanites. Classics such as Iceberg Jeans, G. Brisot, Frenzesh Jeans and Blumarine fill up the racks, alongside Compagnia Italiana, Logan, Soda, (Alt+) Moda, Anthony Dellamore. Among many others.

From cutting-edge sports casuals to sleek corporate separates, something's bound to grab everyone's fancy from the store's diverse collection. The best part, says Sil, is that Tutto Moda's stores won't burn a hole in your pockets.

Now, that's truly living in style-ness!

E-mail the author at cmneal@inquirer.com.ph

ON HIM: Anthony Dellamore red tee (P850) and khaki cargo pants by Dolce (P1,350).

ON ANTONIETTE: Blue detailed halter-top by Soda (P1,250) and (Compagnia Italiana) beige dress (P2,950).

ON ANTONIETTE: Black long-sleeve blouse by Soda (P1,450) and black boot-cut pant by Pierre (P4,800). On Rob: D&G navy blue overcoat-jacket (P3,950) and D&G straight-cut jeans (P4,850).

She wants someone to make an honest woman out of her

LIVE AND LET LIVE

Tito Dedoy

DEAR Tito Dedoy,

I've been in several relationships and right now I'm in a serious one (I think).

I'm 22 and still have a lot to my mind: I think marriage is not necessary, but I worry each time I engage in passion.

I don't want to be emotional because sometimes I feel like I'm being used and I feel empty. There are times when I cry for no reason, nothing up and boring that the man (I am with) won't be the last guy I sleep with.

Until, how I want to marry and to have a relationship with just one guy? But right now it's like it's next to impossible to cause most of my sexual hostships and upon bed.

You seem to be one of those who think that love between sweethearts is sublimely expressed and honed in bed.

Male proponents of this idea say to the girl: "If you really love me then you'll go to bed with me."

Females who subscribe to it say "I want to bed with him because I love him and I don't want to lose him."

The trouble with this is, while a man proves the girl's love, it could as well end up the guy's enemy. Proof of the guy's love...marrying and loving her even out of the bed—has yet to be shown. And, as your case showed again and again, sight never be proven at all. No matter a girl established (me).

The bed, my dear, could be the most unreliable proof of true and great love. It may well be that, to put that point mildly. Just about a living struggle for the first month future Anne did not have to be born in a crib that contained any living soulish to prove that He was above all men.

We must not be bound...as showing or interpreting sincerity and commitment, by stereotypic symbols. A girl does not have to engage in premarital sex to express or prove her good heartfelt a man.

Observe your current boyfriend more closely. If he believes like he loves you only when he feels you, then he is not after your heart and you'd be better off without him. He sounds like letters. Move on. Look for a man who could demonstrate his love for you and just by joining your bodies but unlike by being thought full and responsible.

Observe your own self, too. If you find you cannot love him (or any man after him) without making love to him, then it's either that you don't really love him or you yourself are incapable of giving and receiving love out of bed. If it be the latter, then you need the help of a psychiatrist or psychologist to overcome that problem.

E-mail titodedoy@inquirer.net or send letters to P.O. Box 2333, Makati CPO 1265 Makati City, or P.O. Cross Roads station, Baguio and their cards: Manila, Makati City.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LIFESTYLE

BIBSA Manongsol Sarmiento poses coy and pretty

A generation of strippers

LIFE-STYLED

By
Kristine Sara David

All Time Sage's bumps and grinds could have been anything else but Tita gawk—at the media—but smooth for the cameras. Tita has always been undergarment underground chic, that is, the body purposefully frosted under sets of provocative clothes. Corsages and adornments, as thin as nerve-rattled rose petal valentine's or not above muscles had erotic possibilities.

I myself never considered it was past that as I was talking to him on the phone I got a flash of skin—would you like to go nude for our Body issue? He said no instantly.

Jen—a few weeks later—here for our before Sun Appearance camera, nude with a sheet half covering his front, I asked around during the shoot as I have an inquisitive disposition. I was told she made Tita feel at all, his body itself, as a fit female mannequin dressed in the first and finest of fabrics. Tita said it wasn't a difficult choice at all, making it very brave. It's the way it was. That's the manner in dance ropes in the nude.

I was crazy and myself to see Tita had walked up. Yet, she hoops, the proceeds and everything else went for sale. He never knew worked on chest. It was the first time for Tita, a media exposure of sex ever was one, to go nude before the camera. Not even while running in the rain, he told me, would he have to remove even a bit of his shirt in between, he said (LOL, not per the point). However, in Hanoi, he agreed to strip for cause he said for "against violence here unfortunate are with any body."

Appropriate, he is right. There are images in Tita, like only in her generation unfortunate with the bodies, there are mighty proud of it too.

In Hungary, a woman, in the body's eyes, for instance, not asked was about big good-looking to show off what they've got, and they weren't ashamed about it at all. There are young people from various professions—one model Alma Manongsol Sarmiento, Cali model secretary—but

CONTINUED ON A2

A generation of strippers

Here's a generation that's comfortable with their bodies and so ready for their close-up

Transcription of (illegible)

Elan Gonzales (Gene's son), oral surgeon Victor Gatchalian, young mother and model Ingrid Jacob, among others.

Rosie's shot at the last evening edge...bare top, straight lap-along pants.

Tyra said she was not only comfortable but she good in that pose. He just clicked away as she turned on the charm for the camera.

It's a fitness-crazed generation to whom being fit is now only a means to a body, but also to enjoy life and more hip—it's anything short fat, beauty and health indicators. You've got the bod, then flaunt it.

And they're not camera-phobic at all. They want to see themselves in photos, and how. My son could see he would have his photo taken, I thought it'd be the usual ID. To my surprise, he went to photographer Dominique Jones, his ex-fiancée, had a makeup artist in tow, and posed away. I never confined soon as he printed what I saw the photos.

Indeed that is a generation that's ready for its close-up. Never a moment too soon.

Private chefs

The ultimate in up-quality lifestyle these days, or for some time now, is to have a private chef cook to your home to cook for your guests. Business CEOs, tycoons have made especially desired and coveted by their guests.

This is a sub-niche in dining that is that's shaping up into a mini-do, unless of course, you're a consummate dinner host like Shoukry Katigbak, who can whip up various cuisines, from Thai to Vietnamese, right in his home.

Of course, there are courses for this having a private chef is the latest status symbol, think about it: young professional (dink) who can pay this brand new only for the two but soon-to, he the freedom they have to show what they can do.

What makes the young Carlos Jacinto Miguel stand out in this niche—if just one chef is that he came to the famous Culi Restaurant in Sydney and came home because he and his family wanted to resettle here after more than 15 years in Australia. The Miguel family is coming home, as others are migrating.

Earlier in, was an executive in Philippine Airlines when he and his wife Sylvia (Jacinto) left for Australia years ago after their eldest son was left almost half paralyzed in an accident. He was run over in front of their home in Alabang. Carlos Sr. and Sylvia, traumatized by the accident, wanted to seek better treatment for their son, they didn't want him amputated as the doctors here said. Anyway to cut the story short, Chris son Jane recovered, the Miguels had a good life in Syd. our where their three kids grew up.

In Sydney then, the Antoine of Malacañan, life revolved around the kitchen.

Their heirloom recipes are considerable enough to turn into a book. It was this milieu that produced two chefs in the family—Sylvia's sons Jose and Carlos Jr.

Carlos Jr. said as a kid, he roamed more than fried chicken and sweet spaghetti or at eight, he was already experimenting in the kitchen. In Sydney when his older brother Jose decided to be a chef, he knew he wanted to follow in his footsteps.

Carlos started at the Regent in Sydney and from there, rose through the ranks in various top restaurants there...Lebar's, where he worked 80-hour weeks, Goomalibra Grill, Shaft Let the Famous Rocks Astral and finally as Sails where he was chef de cuisine.

When his folks had to go over for dinner, Carlos cooked dinner that was sumptuous with-out being swooning. You could see the gastric hit to hit both enough to make it seem as if every dish was an impossible dream made possible. As a chef should, he gave the fresh produce of the day on the seasonal and whipped up a sentimental—a quintessential but primordially nutritious set. That night he had for starters, truffle cauliflower soup, seared prawns with mango salsa, coriander and cumin dressing, gorgonzola tortlet with arugula, pear and walnut salad, and for main he braised pigeons, truffle and lemon risotto; he makes crusted rack of lamb with pumpkin custard, asparagus and mint; and a chocolate selection for dessert.

Carlos has no plans to open a place. He just wants to cook for private clientele. He was hooked for the holidays. His current to-do

(E-MAIL the author at [illegible])

Cenie passed away right after the holidays—a few months, a "fun" one, as Percy said, who was president, Jun-Jay has devoted to social causes and especially to art. Percy had a tearful eulogy delivered at St. James Church in Alabang where he enrolled their days at IP. Rita Ara, "God created a masterpiece," he said, "and she is one of them." Many remember that Cenie's finding Easterly was among the early galleries in Manila which helped develop the visual arts scene from the '70s onwards. It was in her convent home in Paco and was the venue of famous exhibits. Artists led by Bienvenido went to her soiree. Her condolences to Percy, and to Cenie's children Paulo and Bey Boria, Nicky and Tony, Eddie, Cocoy.

She is also condoling with Hilton Carballo, our teacher in college who achieved an enviable and who has since run a stable of performing talents.

Riley on only child, Lou her mom Dolores.

(E-mail the author at [illegible])

PRIVATE chef Carlos Miguel

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